

# ALTERNATIVE PROVISION AS AN EDUCATIONAL OPTION: UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF EXCLUDED YOUNG PEOPLE

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**ALTERNATIVE PROVISION AS AN EDUCATIONAL OPTION:  
UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF EXCLUDED YOUNG PEOPLE**

by

Andrew David Malcolm

A thesis submitted to the University of Bedfordshire in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of Professional Doctorate: Leadership in Children's  
and Young People's Services

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## **ABSTRACT**

Alternative provision schooling is an important and on-going part of our education system. Annually around 45,000 pupils are educated in alternative provision schools and despite the existence in general of an underpinning rationale of inclusion this number does not seem to be diminishing. In fact, when New Labour focussed on and were successful in getting the number of pupils excluded from schooling down, over the same time period the number of pupils based in pupil referral units (PRUs are considered a type of alternative provision) increased significantly. Given the intransigent nature of the problem of mainstream schooling being unable to cater for all pupils there is a need to think deeply about and theorise effectively the field of alternative provision schooling.

In addition to the perennial nature of the problem, the characteristics of pupils, the experiences they are more likely to have had, and the destinations and the outcomes they are more likely than the average young person to experience there is a moral imperative to develop positive and effective practice in this field.

This thesis set out to explore two questions. These were the nature of alternative provision, and the effect of this kind of schooling on the young people who attend. Methods used included a survey of providers, qualitative interviews with a sub sample of this group, in-depth life history interviews with 18 young adults and further qualitative interviews with key professionals. In doing this an articulation of mainstream and alternative provision schooling as distinct fields (using Bourdieu's field theory) has been developed. This analysis underpins a model of the types of experience of pupils who end up marginalised and excluded from mainstream schooling and of likely trajectories of success for each of these pupil experience types. The dominant habitus in mainstream schooling necessitates that pupils internalise insignificance and inferiority in the pupil

teacher relationship. In alternative provision the dominant habitus is a relationally mediated equality which influences pupils in a number of ways connected to the experiences which have led to their exclusion from mainstream schooling.

## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Professional Doctorate: Leadership in Children's and Youth Services at the University of Bedfordshire.

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Word count: 79,322 words

Name of candidate: Andrew David Malcolm

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Malcolm', written over a horizontal line.

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> July 2015

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And,

Jane, for your love and friendship.

## **1 Introduction**

This thesis is concerned with educational provision for young people who end up marginalised and excluded from mainstream schooling, with a specific focus on the nature of this provision and its effect on young people who attend.

Schooling has always been contested ground; between those who attend and those who require their attendance; and between those who have differing opinions on what is taught and how it is considered appropriate to teach (see Hayden and Blaya, 2005). As Gleeson (1992) has noted, there has never been a golden age of education and there have always been pupils who have not fit the structures which schooling provides. The schooling in place for pupils who find themselves marginalised and excluded from the mainstream environment is the focus of this thesis. The name used to denote this area of our education system is alternative provision.

The government definition of alternative provision is “an organisation where pupils engage in timetabled, educational activities away from school and school staff” (Taylor, 2012, p4). Alternative provision includes pupil referral units (PRUs), alternative provision academies, alternative provision free schools and a vast range of other organisations which provide schooling away from the mainstream site. It is attended by pupils who are excluded, both formally and informally, from mainstream education. It develops its practice in the context of exclusion and for a diverse group of pupils who present a complex range of challenges for any system which attempts to educate them. Attending educational provision away from the mainstream site is rarely if ever the choice of the pupil or their parents/carers (Gazeley, 2010). Those who attend alternative provision are therefore the pupils who have not conformed to or been able to be ‘held’ by the structure(s) of mainstream schooling.

The 1944 Education Act set up the tripartite and universal system of secondary

education based on grammar, modern and technical schools. Since then there have been two major shifts in educational policy in England. First schooling was restructured around the principle of comprehensive schools which were seen as providing an education for pupils of all abilities and interests. From 1965 local authorities were requested to submit plans for comprehensive reorganisation (most submitted plans by 1969). However, it was only the 1976 Education Act which required this reorganisation (Ball, 1986). Secondly, since the late 1970's and culminating in the Education Reform Act of 1988 there has been a shift towards the marketisation of education. The Education Reform Act of 1988 saw the introduction of school league tables and the national curriculum. Since this time, both of these have remained firmly in place and are fundamental to any understanding of schooling in this country. More recently there has been a massive move towards locating power centrally rather than with local authorities. This can be understood as an enhancement of the marketization mentioned above. The expansion and refocusing of the academies programme and the inauguration of 'free schools' has eclipsed all predecessors of this kind.

All of these factors will have impacted the shape of alternative education provision and the space in which it works. It is however interesting to note that the national curriculum is not always required for pupils who attend alternative provision and there is no centralised or locally standardised approach for assessing quality of provision. It is recognised that the picture of alternative provision set out in the following pages is broadly positive and that this will not always be the case. Specific concerns levelled against alternative provision include that it re-produces disadvantage (Gazeley, 2010), that its practice is gendered (Russell and Thompson, 2011) and the quality of what is available is at times unacceptable (Taylor, 2012). It is not disputed that bad practice will exist, indeed there is a need for far better scrutiny of this area of schooling. However alternative provision exists and as is set out in this thesis, if it is approached effectively it can achieve outcomes that mainstream schooling simply cannot.

### **1.1 Characteristics of pupils attending alternative provision**

Almost half of the pupils in alternative provision have been or are at risk of exclusion from school. Other pupils include those with medical needs, both physical and emotional, those unable to cope in mainstream school (including school refusers) and children temporarily without a school place (DCSF, 2008). In addition to this diversity of needs there is a gender skew with boys making up two thirds of pupils in alternative provision. Pupils are twice as likely as the average school pupil to qualify for free school meals and are more likely to be known to social services, the police and to have had poor attendance in school (Taylor, 2012).

When considering qualifications Taylor expresses concern that only 1.4% of pupils in alternative provision achieve five or more A\* to C grade GCSEs. However 5.1% achieve English and Mathematics qualifications at this level with this figure rising to 37.9% if we include those with a Level 1 qualification (equivalent to a low grade GCSE pass) and 72.8% achieve a pass in a qualification (DfE, 2011a). Regarding post 16 opportunities, pupils excluded from school and therefore likely to have attended alternative provision, are more likely to be Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) than the average pupil (41% as opposed to 14%) (DfE, 2011a, p5). Given the likely backgrounds and destinations of this pupil group it is highly important to develop a clear, grounded understanding of alternative provision and of good practice in this environment; this is central to this thesis.

### **1.2 Aims and objectives**

The research had two aims:

1. To investigate the extent to which practice across different forms of alternative provision is similar to progressive educational values and practice.



2. To investigate the effect of this type of educational experience on the pupils who attend alternative provision.

This is timely as it ties in very neatly with the recommendations of the final report on the 'Back On Track' alternative provision pilots (White et al., 2012). Four of the five recommendations of the report will be addressed by this research, namely:

- The appropriate conceptualisation and promotion of alternative provision
- To recognise and support the value of personalised approaches to engage and support pupils out of mainstream school
- To consider the impacts and outcomes alternative provision has over an extended time period
- To further consider and develop the measurement and assessment of the impacts, outcomes and achievements of alternative provision

From the outset the research was framed by an interest in significant correlations of practice between alternative provision schooling and progressive educational schooling (see chapter 3). The nature of the correlation has already been investigated and outlined as part of the first stage of the professional doctorate assessment by reviewing literature pertaining to both (Malcolm, 2012).

The objectives of this project were:

- To develop a clear picture of what alternative provision looks like across the county in which the research was undertaken, its commonalities and values, and to uncover any relationships between style (e.g., freedom / restriction) and relevant variables (e.g., who funds places, is it part of the Local Authority (LA), i.e. a PRU)

- To gain a detailed picture of the way in which attending alternative provision with particular values and practice has affected ex-pupils paths through life and their choices in the years since leaving.
- To explore what they remember of their time there, how it has affected them, what practice worked and what didn't.
- To develop a coherent narrative about how it is best to educate pupils at alternative provision, why doing it this way is good, why other approaches don't work and how following the best practice outlined enables pupils as they move on from this setting into the rest of their lives.
- To integrate any insight into the interplay between social structure and individual choices which emerges through the interview process into recommendations for alternative provision.
- To fill a research gap, as shown by the recommendations of the 'Back On Track' alternative provision pilots (set out above).

In order to achieve these aims and objectives, twenty-six providers across the county and in some cases beyond were surveyed allowing for consistent themes across a diversity of models of provision to be considered. Eighteen young adults were interviewed and their reflections on alternative provision have been collated. Finally, four young adults were re-interviewed along with three additional key professionals. All of this data has been analysed and has led to the conclusion that alternative provision schooling should be conceptualised as a field distinct from mainstream schooling with its own rules and regularities, capital and related habitus (these terms stem from Bourdieu's work on field theory discussed in chapter 5). Supported by this understanding a model of pupil experience types and trajectories of success has also been developed.

### **1.3 Terminology**

In this thesis, the term schooling will refer to formal, state funded education. Education will be used to refer to a broader conceptualisation of learning which

includes things which happen in school but also the learning which occurs in any situation and in more informal environments (as Carr, 2003b). Children will be used to refer to those of primary school age and young people to those of secondary school age (11 and up). Pupils will be used when a child or young person's relationship to school is in focus.

#### **1.4 Professional interests and personal experiences**

It is important to acknowledge that as a previous manager at an alternative provision school, the researcher practiced in this dynamic and diverse field of education. Working on and writing this thesis is an opportunity to collate these experiences of practice along with the research data which has been collected.

As befits a professional doctorate it is appropriate to give an account of the researcher's professional experiences relating to alternative provision schooling and academic and general life experience. Due to the subject matter, this section is written in the first person.

My own experience of school was one of relative success although high school did include some experience of bullying and personal withdrawal although never truancy. Academically I did well, especially in maths and ended up focussing my attention here in college studying maths, further maths and physics to A level. It was somewhat by chance that I ended up successfully applying to Homerton College Cambridge. Although my parents had both been at Cambridge (my mum attended Homerton when it was a teacher training college), it had never been an aspiration or even a brief consideration. The catalyst was my college tutor sending me to the careers office because I didn't have any idea what I wanted to apply to university to study. They asked what I was interested in, and I suggested that I had thought about teaching, the careers advisor decided that I should apply to Homerton to study education and mathematics. The forms had to be completed by the end of the week because of the early closure date for Oxbridge applications but I managed this without too much difficulty, had an interview

later in the term, and was accepted onto the course before the New Year. I then deferred my place so as to be able to attend a one year music course in Coventry pursuing my interest in playing the guitar.

At university I returned to studying mathematics. However this was now combined with the study of philosophy, psychology, history and sociology of education and involved the writing of essays – something I had not undertaken for a number of years! Despite the challenge this presented, it was learning about education from multiple perspectives that captured my interest and expanded my horizons. During my time at university I met a range of educational theory, explored crossing traditional subject boundaries and gained a range of experience in both infant and junior schools. After university I moved back to my home town and started a school centred initial teacher training course in secondary mathematics. Alongside this I volunteered at a town centre young people's drop-in centre on a weekly basis. I felt better suited to the informality and flexibility of the drop-in. I wanted to teach because I wanted to help young people but found that there was little space for this kind of relationship in mainstream education. I did however spend some of my time in the inclusion unit of the school where I was placed and found this to be a better match to my aspirations. With a sense of relief I completed my PGCE and consequently did not look for a full time teaching position, although this meant that I ended up out of education, employment or training for the next eight months before finding employment at an alternative provider.

This role involved teaching maths and science to pupils at the school and presented the opportunity both to teach and provide more holistic support to young people who had had difficult life experiences. As such, it used the skills I had gained in training as a teacher and in volunteering. As I became established in this role elements of educational theory began to cohere with my experience on the ground. In particular models of stress and coping which I had been taught

in a psychology course at university came to hold new meaning. The models were actually broadly focussed on teacher stress and coping (Chaplain, 2003) however in this context they enabled me to make sense of a lot of the acting out behaviour that we experienced in the school. A year and a half later, the head teacher retired and myself and another member of staff who had previously worked as a manager took on responsibility for the school. My role was as 'Teaching and Learning Manager' and involved taking responsibility for the education within the school. During my first term in this role we were inspected by Ofsted and were considered to be a good school with relationships between staff and students described as excellent. In my role I attended and instigated many professionals meetings. There were looked after child reviews for pupils who were in care, statement reviews for pupils with a statement of SEN and when a young person fell outside of these (and sometimes even if they did not) but was clearly experiencing difficulties in life we would work with other agencies and professionals to try and get appropriate support in place. I also spent time liaising with other providers and local authority representatives in this role and attended alternative provider meetings which had been set up by the local authority.

I worked in this position for a year and for the last three months (from May 2011) was also elected as a local government councillor. From September 2011 I have been working on my professional doctorate. In my role as a councillor I am a governor at a local high school, the chair of the authority's young people's panel (known as a 'Children in Care Council' elsewhere) and am on the management committee for the town's pupil referral unit.

The relationships from my time managing the alternative provision and the further connections I developed after becoming a councillor were significant in that I had a much higher level of local knowledge and relationships than most researchers would have when embarking on a project. This was incredibly

helpful when undertaking field work but of course was also a potential pitfall when it came to ethical approval. However as will be discussed elsewhere these challenges were outlined at the beginning of the research process and any concerns that arose as the research was undertaken were discussed in supervision before being addressed.

In the first year of the professional doctorate we were to write a literature review about the field we were interested in going on to research. I quickly settled on exclusion from school and over time came to focus on alternative provision. In reading everything I could find which related to exclusion and alternative provision and as I reflected on my experience of working in the field and of what a sociological account of alternative provision might consider I became convinced that what was going on in alternative provision had a very different underlying educational theory to that which is found in mainstream education. This led me to reading about educational theory and revisiting topics I had covered during my undergraduate studies. As I did this I was struck by similarities between the approach encouraged and used by progressive educational theorists and what I was reading about and had experienced of alternative provision. My reading focussed on Susan Issacs of the Malting House School, Rudolph Steiner of Steiner schools, Maria Montessori of Montessori schools and in particular A. S. Neill of Summerhill.

Although the ideas about progressive education explored in my article are not central to this thesis they did shape and inform my thoughts about the educational approach underpinning much alternative provision practice. As such it is helpful to consider the dominant themes of a progressive approach and the way in which they connect to the topics which are mentioned time and again in articles and reports about alternative provision.

### **1.5 Thesis structure**

The structure of the remainder of this thesis runs as follows. The next chapter

will focus on policy and statistics related to alternative provision and exclusion. This will involve considering the funding framework, the legalities of school exclusion and use of alternative provision, and statistical trends which highlight the nature and scale of the subject under consideration.

The literature review will begin by exploring what previous research has said about alternative provision, the nature of practice undertaken there and the characteristics of pupils who attend. This will be followed by a discussion of schooling, its history and relevant policy and practice. The literature review will conclude with a consideration of success, both in terms of current policy and also, more philosophically, what should be regarded as the marks of a successful education or school career.

The methodology will begin with an outline of the research which was undertaken and the relevant context of this work. It will conclude with a discussion of the analysis process both in terms of the overarching approach taken and the detail of working this through.

The theory chapter will review Bourdieu's field theory and related concepts which are used in the discussion and analysis of the research data within the findings chapter.

The findings will be considered in three parts. The first section will outline a conceptualisation of mainstream and alternative provision schooling as distinct fields. The second will build on this by considering types of experience of pupils who end up marginalised and excluded from mainstream schooling and placed into alternative provision. The third section will align a number of trajectories of success to the types of pupil experience model developed in the previous section.

The thesis will conclude with recommendations for practice, policy and research addressed to mainstream and alternative provision schools, local authorities, central government and researchers interested in alternative provision schooling.



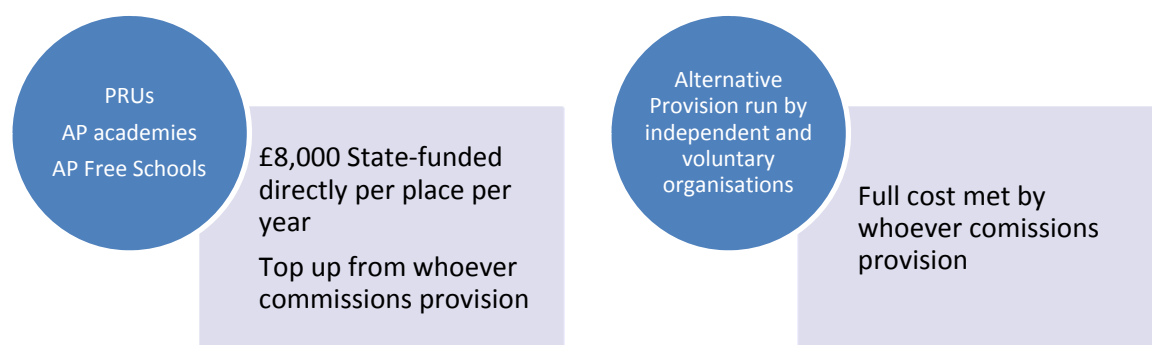
## 2 Policy and Statistics

For this study to be effective, it must begin by being grounded in the reality of the policy which both governs and places constraints upon practice. Drawing on available statistical data, this will involve considering the funding framework; the legalities of school exclusion and use of alternative provision; the guidelines in place for the monitoring of alternative provision; and statistical trends which highlight the nature and scale of the issue.

### 2.1 Current statutory funding framework

Funding arrangements for alternative provision are key to understanding the range and nature of the education their pupils receive. Recent government changes mean that pupil referral units “will receive base funding of £8,000 per place, topped up by funding from the commissioning local authority or school for each pupil admitted” (DfE, 2013, p7). This is the same allocation as for Alternative Provision Academies and Alternative Provision Free Schools. We can thus distinguish two types of funding arrangement for alternative provision: those who receive direct state-funding of £8,000 per place (per year) and who seek a ‘top up’ from whoever commissions the alternative provision, and those who seek the full amount for providing each place from the commissioner of that placement. This picture can be slightly more complex where charity funding is in play or a project is rolled out nationally by government.

Figure 2.1 – Funding arrangements



This would seem to place PRUs, AP academies and AP Free Schools in an advantageous position when compared to other providers who do not receive £8,000 per place each year. This funding will give stability where it is in place – from the researcher’s background knowledge it is common for alternative providers to run a deficit over the first few months of a new academic year as they wait for places to fill up after losing their last cohort. But this funding may not present a significant advantage because if a provider becomes an AP Free School they are required to pay significantly higher pension contributions for members of staff. Beyond the stability that a consistent basic income stream brings the other noticeable advantage is a high level of capital investment into sites / facilities for the provision (Anon, personal communication).

Pupil referral units are able to convert to become alternative provision academies and are being strongly encouraged to do this. By 2018 it is expected that all pupil referral units will have converted to become alternative provision academies unless “maintenance by the LA added value to the operation of the PRU” (Taylor 2012, p21). Alternative providers in the independent and voluntary sectors are able to apply to become AP Free Schools and if local authorities wish to open up a new provision it must be either an AP Academy or an AP Free School.

## **2.2 Framework for the use of alternative provision**

There are two routes by which a pupil can be placed in alternative provision: the placement may be made either by the local authority or by the school at which the pupil is on roll. When the placement is made by the local authority it will be because the pupil has been permanently excluded, has medical needs or for ‘other reasons’ which stop them receiving a suitable education without the use of such provision. The category of ‘other reasons’ is not elaborated upon however this situation can be considered to denote pupils who do not currently have a school place. This could be because of a high number of house moves, being a part of a Traveller community (see Hayden and Blaya, 2005), or, because

the pupil has a history of school refusal or home education. When a pupil has been permanently excluded the local authority has a statutory responsibility to provide full time (defined as 'the same amount of education they would receive in a maintained school', generally understood to mean 25 hours a week) education from day 6. When a pupil has medical needs or 'other reasons' there is no statutory obligation but local authorities are encouraged to 'ensure that such pupils are placed as quickly as possible' (DfE, 2012).

When the placement is made by the school at which the pupil is on roll it can be because of the duty to arrange full time education from day 6 of any fixed term exclusion or because the school is seeking to 'direct a pupil off-site for education to improve behaviour'. The pupils who are directed off site for education to improve their behaviour are more likely to have a statement of SEN, be a looked after child, be of certain ethnicity, or be in receipt of free school meals (FSM). The extent of this over representation is detailed below.

### **2.3 Those statistically more likely to attend alternative provision**

We can see this over representation played out in the statistics on who attends alternative provision published in two recent reports. In the first 75% were reported as having special educational needs, 62% without statements and 13% with statements (DCSF, 2008). In the second, 79% of pupils in PRUs were reported as having SEN (Taylor, 2012). DfE figures from the 2012 census showed that 17% of pupils in alternative provision and 10.4% of pupils in PRUs were children in care (figures based on the AP census and PRU census respectively – the AP census does not include PRUs). When we compare these figures with the overall prevalence of SEN pupils and CiC in the school population we can see that they are hugely over-represented in alternative provision:

- Children in care total incidence of 0.82% (67,050 out of 8,178,200) in the whole school population compared to 14.4% overall in alternative provision

- SEN (with and without statement) total incidence of 19.8% (1,618,340 out of 8,178,200) in the whole school population compared to 75% or 79% in alternative provision

The extent of this over representation of pupils with SEN and those in local authority care is stark when represented graphically:

Figure 2.2 – Children in Care incidence by type of school in 2011/12

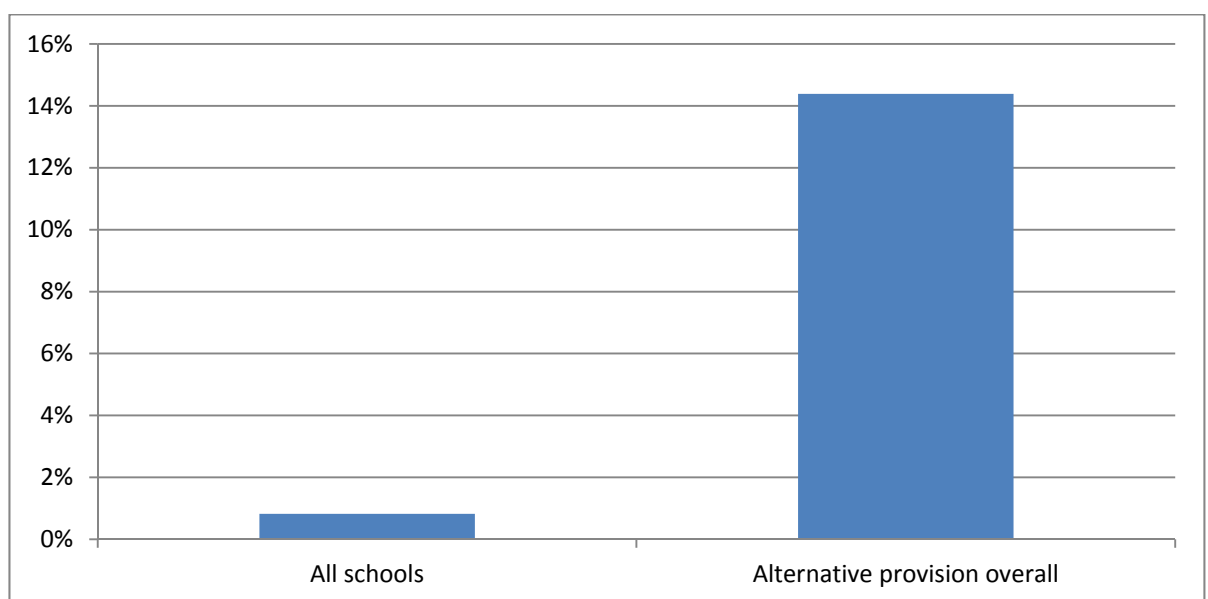
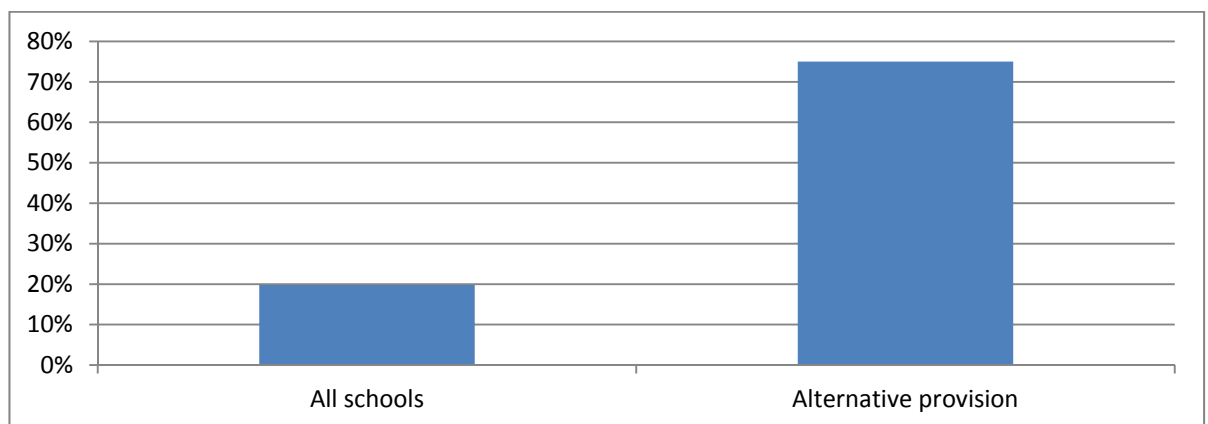
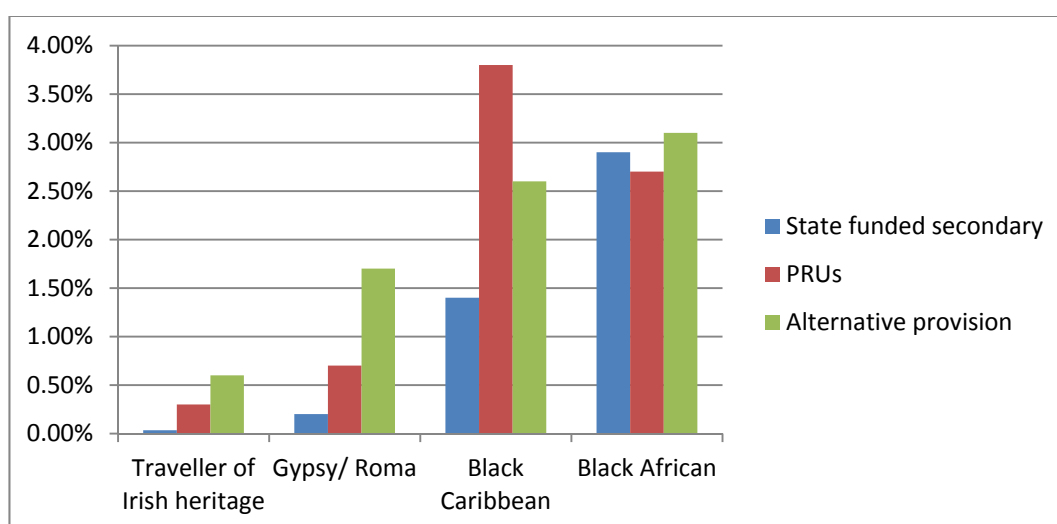


Figure 2.3 – SEN (with Statement, school action and school action plus) incidence by type of school in 2011/12



The over representation of young people from Black Caribbean and Black African backgrounds is well established as an issue, particularly in relation to exclusion (see Parsons, 1999 and Youdell, 2003), and data from the 2012 census shows that this is still the case, though only for young people from Black Caribbean backgrounds. Less well established in the literature but also significant is the over representation of young people from Traveller of Irish heritage and Gypsy/Roma backgrounds.

Figure 2.4 – Ethnicity (groups significantly over represented) incidence by type of school



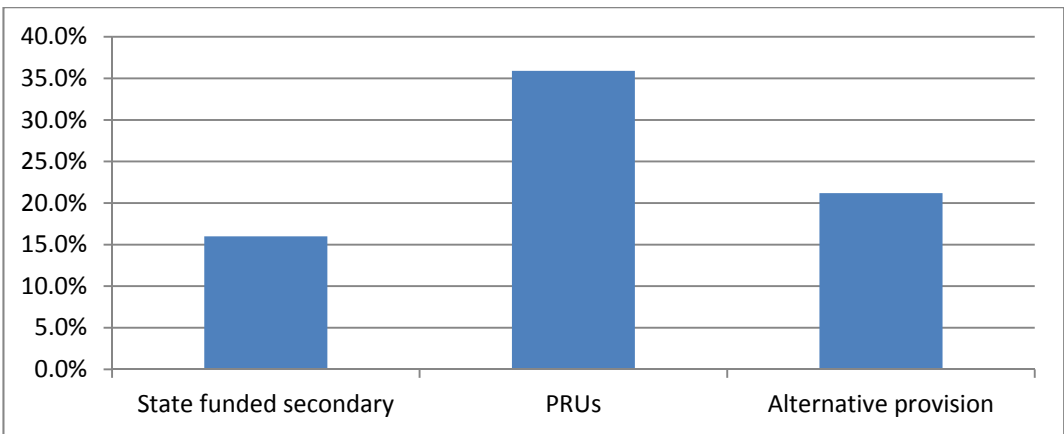
	Background			
	Traveller of Irish heritage	Gypsy/ Roma	Black Caribbean	Black African
State funded secondary	0.03%	0.20%	1.40%	2.90%
PRUs	0.30%	0.70%	3.80%	2.70%
Alternative provision	0.60%	1.70%	2.60%	3.10%

Young people from a Gypsy/Roma background are represented at 3.5 times and 8.5 times the rate that they are in state funded secondary schooling in PRUs and alternative provision respectively. Whilst for young people from a Traveller of Irish heritage background the figures for PRUs and alternative provision are 10

times and 20 times the rate in mainstream schooling. This is highly significant and is almost as stark as the over representation of children in care in PRUs and alternative provision. The work of D’Arcy (2014) gives qualitative detail on Traveller and Gypsy/Roma experiences of schooling.

The number of young people in receipt of free school meals is well established as a proxy for poverty and as such the incidence of FSM pupils by school type is included below – PRUs and alternative provision are included separately as there is separate census for each.

Figure 2.5 – FSM (eligible and claiming) incidence and aged 11 – 15 at time of school census



Percentage of school population who are FSM (eligible for and claiming) and aged 11 – 15 at time of school census	
State funded secondary	16.0%
PRUs	35.9%
Alternative provision	21.2%

Young people in receipt of FSM in PRUs are represented at over twice the rate that they are in state funded secondary schools. They are also over represented but less significantly so within alternative provision schools.

## 2.4 The exclusion of pupils with SEN and children in local authority care

It is recommended in government guidance on alternative provision that ‘head teachers should, as far as possible, avoid excluding permanently any pupil with a statement of SEN or a looked after child’ (DfE, 2012). The side effect of this guidance is to encourage the use of alternative provision with these pupils rather than excluding them permanently.

Figure 2.6 – Exclusion of pupils with SEN

2011/12		Pupils excluded	Pupils total	Excluded %
Without SEN		1,390 (27%)	6,559,860 (80.2%)	0.02%
With SEN (school action or school action plus)		3,400 (66%)	1,392,215 (17.0%)	0.24%
With SEN (with statement)		380 (7%)	226,125 (2.8%)	0.17%
All pupils		5,170	8,178,200	0.06%

Figure 2.7 – Exclusion of children in care

2008/09		Pupils excluded	Pupils total	Pupils excluded of pupils total and %
Child in care (2008/09)[looked after continuously for 12 months]		100 (1.53%)	42,950 (0.53%)	0.23%
All pupils		6,550	8,092,280	0.08%

When we consider the tables above we can see that for both statemented pupils and Children in Care the rate of exclusion is nearly three times the national average for the year (for pupils with SEN but without a statement the rate is four times the national average). So despite the recommendation mentioned above these pupils are still being excluded at a far higher rate than the average pupil. From the census data above it is also clear that many Children in Care and SEN pupils are placed into alternative provision without being formally excluded.

## 2.5 The funding of statistically over represented groups

In the case of a pupil with a statement of SEN, placing them in off-site provision may not be too financially costly to the school as the pupil will have additional funding which can be used for offsite rather than onsite provision. When considering the use of offsite provision for a pupil with a statement of SEN the school has a duty to do this in partnership with the local authority and others (organisations who work with / support the pupil) and should 'assess the suitability of a provision for a pupil's SEN' (DfE, 2012). If a pupil is placed part time at an alternative provision this should either be combined with additional placement(s) or with time in school so that they are receiving full time provision.



Young people who are in, or who have left local authority care attract pupil premium funding of £1,900 per year. This funding is distributed by the head of the virtual school for the local authority area rather than directly to schools. The amount that any individual young person has allocated to them personally will be dependent on the approach taken by the head of the virtual school in any given location. This funding stream was developed in the second half of the coalition government's term of office. It would be interesting to analyse its use vis-à-vis alternative provision in future years.

As far as the researcher is aware, there is no funding available for pupils from particular cultural backgrounds. Any funding distributed along these lines was curtailed when the pupil premium was introduced. In addition to pupil premium funding designated for children in care it is also assigned to any pupil who is in receipt, or has been in the last six years, of free school meals. Young people at secondary school attract £935 pupil premium funding per year. Again, in future years it would be interesting to analyse the use of this funding for alternative provision schooling. The use of pupil premium funding is monitored by Ofsted and is thought to have been well spent if the achievement gap between pupil premium students and their peers is narrowing. It is therefore more likely to be spent on whole school rather than individual interventions such as alternative provision.

## **2.6 Rules for monitoring alternative provision**

Whether placement into alternative provision is made by the local authority or the school at which the pupil is placed, there are government guidelines which should be followed. These state that parents and any other parties involved (this would include the LA if pupil had a statement of SEN) should receive information on why the placement is being made, when and where it will take place and how it will be reviewed. It also states that wherever possible parents should be engaged in this decision. When it comes to reviewing placements the guidance states that parents must be involved in this process and reviews should be often

enough to show that objectives are being met and the pupil is benefitting. Although no time frame is given for the frequency of reviews it is suggested that a review can be requested and that this must be complied with as soon as is possible unless there has already been a review in the last 10 weeks. This would seem to suggest that placements should be reviewed around once every half term.

When a placement comes to an end it can either be because of reintegration into mainstream school or because the pupil has reached school leaving age. If the pupil is to be reintegrated there should be plans in place to support this (which should have been part of the planning and monitoring from the very beginning of the process). These plans should be informed by a final report from the provider. In addition, the views of the pupil should also be sought on the placement and these should be used to inform any further use of alternative provision (this information could be helpfully reviewed in future years). When a placement ends because the pupil reaches school leaving age there is a requirement to work with the provider to support the pupil into further education, training or employment. Information on destinations of pupils who have left alternative provision placements should be recorded and used to inform planning for and use of alternative provision (DfE, 2013).

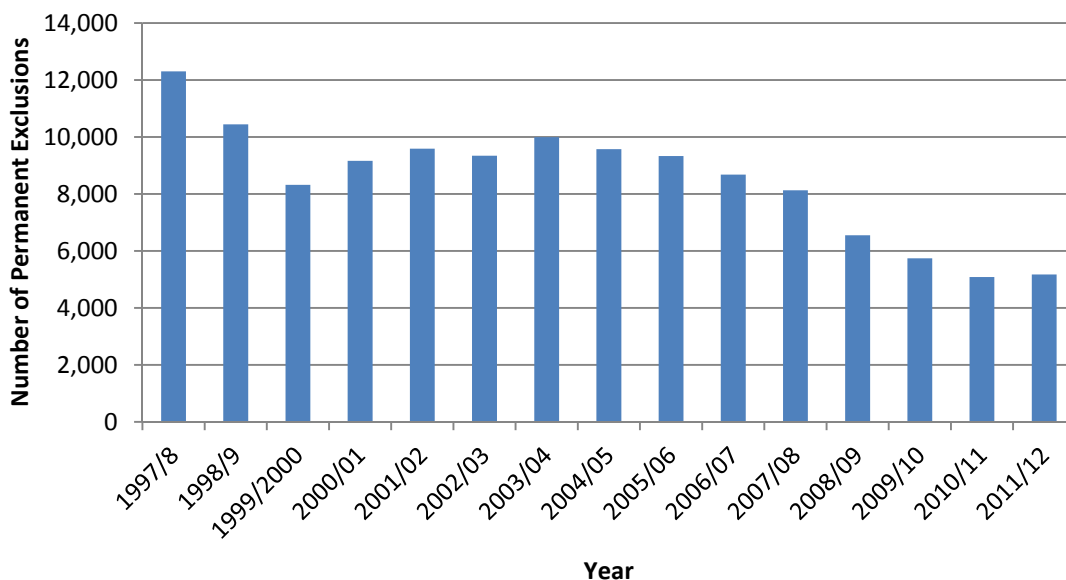
There is a lack of published data regarding children and young people 'who cannot attend school because of health needs'. It was recognised in the 'Back On Track' publications that some of the pupils who attend alternative provision do so because of 'medical needs' and in 2000-1 over 500,000 children and young people required education outside of school for this reason, but there is a dearth of research into this topic (Harris and Farrell, 2004). In Local Authority 1 it was possible to discover that 62 with 'medical needs' were supported with tutoring in the financial year 2014 – 15. When this lack of scrutiny is coupled with the lack of any statutory obligation to fund an educational placement for a pupil with

‘medical needs’ (as mentioned above) a worrying gap is revealed. This will be addressed in recommendations.

## 2.7 The scale of the problem and recent social trends

As has already been discussed, alternative education provision is used to provide schooling for a number of different groups of pupils. One distinct group is pupils who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schooling. It was this group of pupils who were the focus of one of New Labour’s targets when in government. In 1998 targets were set to reduce permanent exclusions by a third by 2002. In the school year 1997/8 there were 12,300 permanent exclusions, this would mean that by 2002/3 the aim would be to see only 8,200 pupils permanently excluded. The actual figure for 2002/3 was 9,340 permanent exclusions, so although the numbers had decreased the reduction of a third wasn’t actually achieved until 2007/8 when the number was 8,130. Since this time this figure has continued to decrease as can be seen from the graph below:

Figure 2.8 – Permanent exclusion 1997 – 2011



These figures beg an important question: If pupils were now less likely to be permanently excluded, what was now happening to them in school, or, if they were not in mainstream school, where were they being educated.

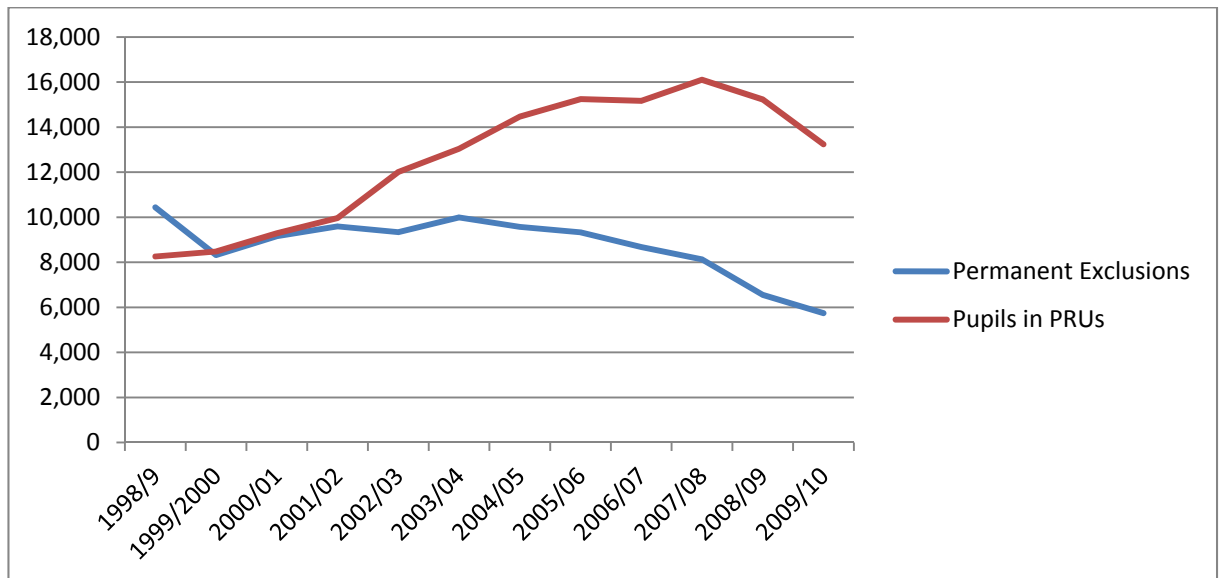
Part of the answer to this question can be seen if we take a look at the number of pupils in Pupil Referral Units over this time period. The figures for the number of pupils in PRUs and alternative provision are particularly difficult to unpick as there are often slight variations in different government statistical publications (Smith, 2008). The table below sets out a continuous set of figures which starts with 8,260 pupils in PRUs in 1998/9 and peaks with 16,100 in 2007/8.

Figure 2.9 – Permanent exclusions and pupils in PRUs 1998 – 2009

Year	Permanent Exclusions	Pupils in PRUs
1998/9	10,440	8,260
1999/2000	8,320	8,480
2000/01	9,160	9,290
2001/02	9,590	9,960
2002/03	9,340	12,010
2003/04	9,990	13,040
2004/05	9,570	14,470
2005/06	9,330	15,240
2006/07	8,680	15,160
2007/08	8,130	16,100
2008/09	6,550	15,230
2009/10	5,740	13,240

The figures in this table and in figure 2.11 below are compiled from published DfE census data. The presentation of these figures was changed in 2010 as can be seen in figure 2.11. The reason for the apparent inconsistency between the figures in 2.9 and 2.11 is that data used in 2.9 does not include dual registered pupils.

Figure 2.10 – Graph showing permanent exclusions and pupils in PRUs 1998 – 2009



This graph shows the decrease in the number of permanently excluded pupils but a corresponding increase in pupils in PRUs. So although the use of permanent exclusions had gone down the numbers of pupils being placed in PRUs had significantly increased. Far outstripping the reduction in the number of pupils who were no longer being permanently excluded.

Over the period 1997 – 2010 the number of pupil referral units increased from 309 to 452 (Lupton and Obolenskaya, 2013). The available information relating to the number of pupils in PRUs and alternative provision is patchy and inconsistent (as with exclusion data – Smith, 2008 and Gazeley, 2010). The table below reviews the number of pupils in PRUs and alternative provision from 2006 – 2013, these figures show that there are a fairly consistent number of pupils in all alternative provision, with perhaps a peak in 2008 and a slight downward trend since then.

Figure 2.11 – Pupils attending PRUs and alternative provision 2006 – 2014

Year	Pupils in PRUs	Pupils in PRUs who are dual registered with their main registration elsewhere	All pupils in PRUs	Pupils in AP	All Pupils in AP and PRUs
January 2006	23,670	Included in previous column	23,670		
January 2007	24,165	Included in previous column	24,165		
January 2008	25,290	Included in previous column	25,290		
January 2009	24,760	Included in previous column	24,760		
January 2010	15,550				
January 2011	14,050	9,125	23,175	23,020	46,195
January 2012	13,495	9,145	22,640	22,130	44,770
January 2013	12,950	9,425	22,375	22,205	44,580
January 2014	12,895	9,685	22,580	20,215	42,795

Over recent years there has been a reduction in numbers of permanent exclusion and a fairly consistent number of pupils in all alternative provision. Gazeley (2010) makes a similar connection between falling rates of permanent exclusion and increasing use of managed moves. The current situation of reduced permanent exclusions and consistent numbers in all alternative provision suggests there is a positive story about permanent exclusions. It is however the

pupils, of whom there are over 40,000 every year, whose needs and futures must be upmost in mind as these topics are considered. A reduction in pupils permanently excluded from school means that there are fewer pupils being tarred with this blunt and ineffectual instrument the negative effects of which are well documented (Pirrie et al., 2010). Berridge et al. (2001) found that in their sample 44% of excluded pupils (117 of 263) started offending following permanent exclusion. They suggested that:

“permanent exclusion tended to trigger a complex chain of events which served to loosen the young person’s affiliation and commitment to a conventional way of life. This important transition was characterised by: the loss of time structures; a re-casting of identity; a changed relationship with parents and siblings; the erosion of contact with pro-social peers and adults; closer association with similarly situated young people and heightened vulnerability to police surveillance” (Berridge et al., 2001, p vi)

The outcomes for pupils who are essentially informally excluded from mainstream schooling must be scrutinised. Alternative provision must be theorised and approached effectively if these pupils are not to just slip through the cracks left behind by the culture found within mainstream schooling.

The next chapter will review literature which is relevant to this thesis.

### **3 Literature review**

This chapter will review the literature necessary for a detailed understanding of educational practice in alternative provision and outcomes for pupils who have attended this type of schooling. The chapter considers the nature of alternative provision schooling; the characteristics of pupils who attend and their outcomes according to different measures; and, what education entails in the context of alternative provision according to different educational theories.

The literature in this area is wide ranging and establishing a logical structure for its review is challenging. To some extent, the way in which this chapter proceeds reflects the development of the thesis and its underpinning theory. Central to this development was the article written by the researcher for the first year of the professional doctorate course which drew similarities between alternative provision and progressive educational practice (Malcolm, 2012). This explored alternative provision as a different kind of educational practice to mainstream schooling. This led to the use of Bourdieu's field theory (see Chapter 5) to consider the differences between mainstream and alternative provision schooling and the results of this different kind of educational practice.

Whilst it is still the researcher's opinion that there are interesting and pertinent similarities between alternative provision and progressive education; the focus of the work shifted. During the process of designing the research, and in being guided by those involved in the research, a different framing of the argument developed. As such, progressive educational practice is no longer central to this thesis, however, the topic is relevant to the discussion of success below.

The underlying argument of this chapter is that alternative provision is distinct in the educational practice undertaken therein. The pupils who attend are more likely to have had difficult and challenging life experiences and are less likely than their peers to achieve positive outcomes in terms of qualifications and NEET status. An in depth exploration of disadvantage and education shows outcomes



to be linked to economic rather than educational policy. As such, educational practice should be grounded on a robust philosophy of what education is about and what it attempts to achieve, rather than on connections to economic outcomes.

Methodologically this is not a systematic review. A comprehensive search of material related to alternative provision, pupil referral units and exclusion was initially undertaken. This has been used throughout the process as a base for further searching and reference harvesting. Alongside this, relevant research journals (International Journal of Inclusive Education, British Journal of Sociology of Education, and Pastoral Care in Education) have been consistently monitored for relevant publications.

### **3.1 Alternative provision**

The literature relating to alternative provision includes numerous studies of specific projects (for example, Cook 2005, McLoughlin 2010, Meo & Parker 2006, de Castella 2011, Barrow 2000, Cullen & Monroe 2010, Malberg 2008). There are many scoping studies undertaken by, or on behalf of government (Ofsted 2004, 2011, 2013 & 2014, Kendall et al., 2003 & 2007, Thompson & Russell 2007, McCluskey et al., 2013). There are government strategies, guidance and reports on pilot projects (DCSF 2008, White et al. 2012, Taylor 2012, DfE 2013, Clay and Thomas 2014). There is also the beginnings of literature on specific issues in alternative provision such as Gender (Russell and Thomson, 2011) the lack of consistent monitoring (Thomson and Russell, 2009) and recommendations for reducing shortcomings and better practice (Riley et al., 2006, Gazeley et al., 2013, McCluskey et al., 2015).

What is lacking is the effective theorising of alternative provision. Gazeley (2010) has made a start to this and Russell and Thompson's (2011) work is also relevant here but this thesis aims to redress a significant gap in the research literature.

### **3.1.1 The nature of practice**

It is important to begin by considering the nature of the practice which is undertaken within alternative provision schools. As noted earlier, 'alternative provision' covers a range of activities and has recently been defined as "an organisation where pupils engage in timetabled educational activities away from school and school staff" (Taylor, 2012, p4).

Alternative provision can be run by a variety of groups including voluntary organisations, public bodies, private companies and charities and can involve activities ranging from sport to hairdressing, from horse care and riding to art, bricklaying and working in a music studio or on a farm. It can also look much like the PRU models described below offering a small educational setting.

Alternative provision can be used in a range of ways to support a young person, it could be used as their full time provision (either for a limited period or long term), or as part of a package involving more than one alternative provider or alongside a mainstream school (this is called dual registering and can also be short or long term). Some pupils will attend a short course at an alternative provision school used by their sending school as a motivator for the rest of their time in school; others will attend alternative provision part time and will not be placed anywhere the rest of the week – this is less common but it would be naïve to think it does not occur. The lack of statutory requirement noted above to place pupils with 'medical needs' could lead to this situation.

The definition above includes pupil referral units (PRUs) as a type of alternative provision; a PRU is run by the local authority and broadly speaking will run similar lessons to a mainstream school but in a smaller setting. PRUs can be run as a setting for excluded pupils who are not expected to return to mainstream and will be placed at the unit until the end of their schooling, or on a revolving door basis. This means that some pupils will attend the centre for a period of time with a view to returning to mainstream schooling once they are ready. This description of PRUs is fallible as they could be run as a combination of the above

or in a different manner altogether. They are also likely to display similar characteristics to alternative provision, hence their inclusion in the definition above.

The following section on alternative provision will draw out common themes of practice within alternative provision by using both government documents and research literature on alternative provision. Some literature on PRU provision will also be included. These themes are: relationships, working therapeutically to meet all the needs of each young person, respect, individualisation both in terms of understanding the individual and personalisation of learning, the freedom to be active, and a focus on non-academic aspects of the curriculum including sports, drama, practical and vocational learning and work experience.

### ***Deep relationships***

The most commonly repeated theme is concerned with the nature of the relationships between staff and students, or as Leather (2009) put it 'deep relationships'. In his research these relationships meant that pupils characterised staff as fun, caring, helpful, nice and better than in previous school experiences; for staff their relationships with pupils "have many aspects, take time and effort to build and they essentially require forgiveness by staff whilst pupils learn to behave and act appropriately" (Leather, 2009, p84). In an Ofsted report on alternative provision it is commented that staff were supportive and respectful, at one placement the staff "let him [a student] work independently but were always there to offer help if needed and they also were interested in his future" (Ofsted, 2011, p43). Another way staff worked with students was to work alongside them and discuss their own strategies for coping with any difficulties or challenges in their work. In an NFER (National Foundation for Educational Research) paper on successful alternative provision initiatives the quality of relationship "emerged as perhaps the most critical factor in young people's successful re-engagement (both socially and educationally)" (Kendall et al., 2003, p134). In fact over 75% of pupils interviewed claimed their personal

behaviour and relationships with staff had improved. They also felt that building positive relationships with staff enabled them to engage more positively with adults in general. The staff and the way in which they interacted with the pupils was highly rated by 53 out of 62 young people (Kendall et al., 2003).

### ***Working therapeutically***

Across alternative providers there is a commitment to working therapeutically, using counselling and especially meeting the personal, social and health needs of students. Parental involvement was seen as important and though this can be challenging, addressing issues at home can enable a pupil's needs to be met more effectively (Kendall et al., 2007). It was also common practice for Key-workers and mentoring style relationships to be used and, similarly to PHSE, counselling was not always on the timetable but was an integral feature of general provision (Kendall et al., 2003). It is understood that if this foundation of working therapeutically and meeting the needs of the pupil is not present any other provision that is attempted will flounder.

### ***Respect***

The concept of respect was repeated again and again by pupils within alternative provision and recurs when providers describe effective provision (Kendall et al., 2007). This linked to being treated like an adult and meant that as well as being engaged within a more grown up framework more was expected of young people. It is seen as the pupil's right to be treated maturely but also as their responsibility to treat others with an equal respect. One young person who had been involved in a football project at a PRU described this dynamic:

*"Football disciplines you and you have to be more mature, not fight or cause problems – you have to respect yourself and everyone else."* (Cullen and Monroe, 2010, p72).

Of course the young people (and probably at times the staff) did not always live up to this ideal. This required the forgiveness of staff to give them time and

space to learn from their mistakes.

### ***Individualisation***

It is only in understanding the individual young person that they will be able to be supported and encouraged to grow. This individualisation also links to the curriculum with regards to the personalisation of learning. An individualised approach seems to be a hallmark of alternative provision and programmes are often designed to correspond with the needs and interests of the pupil. Those who were interviewed for the NFER report highlighted the variety and flexibility of programmes and the ability to tailor programmes to the needs of individual pupils as being important aspects of successful alternative provision (Kendall et al., 2003). Asking pupils which courses or activities would be most appropriate for them means that their needs are more likely to be met and that the pupils will be more effectively engaged and better motivated. This is shown to be the case by the Ofsted report which mentions that often the thing that students first wanted to talk about was the content of the course and that this was where “the placements had been particularly well matched to the students’ interests” (Ofsted, 2011, p40).

### ***Freedom to be active***

The freedom to choose was often mentioned by pupils and included the ability to move around within lessons and in being able to be active as opposed to feeling and being constrained within the classroom, where lessons took place in a more relaxed educational environment and where there were opportunities for physical movement in their learning. The pupils placed high value on this freedom.

### ***A wider vision of learning***

Across alternative providers there was a common focus on sports, drama and practical learning which in addition often linked to vocational learning and work experience. Leather (2009) describes an approach taken which enabled pupils to “engage positively with education and featured lessons... [and] included weekly outdoor learning lessons which provided a rich context for informal learning to

take place alongside the formal objectives” (p2). Alternative providers also offered access to a range of vocational opportunities enabling young people to try out and work on skills they would have been unable to develop in mainstream schooling and encouraging participation where pupils have become disengaged.

### **3.1.2 The pupils who attend**

It is helpful to consider the likely background experiences and educational outcomes of the young people who attend alternative provision because they will both shape and be shaped by their context and are therefore key to understanding the situation as a whole.

The pupils who attend alternative provision can be there for a variety of reasons. As was seen in chapter 2, children and young people with SEN, those who have experienced local authority care, and those from specific cultural backgrounds (Travellers of Irish heritage, Gypsy/Roma and Black Caribbean) are significantly over represented in alternative provision schooling. Parsons (1999), drawing on Ofsted and NFER reports and the work of Hayden, discussed other experiences common to pupils excluded from mainstream as including: family breakdown, multiple moves/disruption, bereavement, disability, violence/abuse, major accidents/incidents, previous serious exclusion, poor basic skills, peer pressure, limited aspirations/opportunities, poor relationships, bullying and dissatisfaction with the curriculum. Parsons notes that these will present major difficulties as young people attempt to cope with life.

Young people who attend alternative provision schools are generally seen as less likely to ‘succeed’ educationally. In the introduction the qualifications achieved by excluded pupils were considered. Given that the number of exclusions have been reducing this is likely to be the sharper end of things, however it is important to consider the role of alternative provision in the engagement of young people in further opportunities post schooling.

### **3.1.3 Outcome measurements for alternative provision**

Given the multiple factors in play it is clear that alternative provision has a challenging role and questions are raised about what it is possible for alternative provision to achieve. The co-location of many issues in the lives of these pupils means that the effectiveness of alternative education provision will tend to be measured using statistics such as Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) and involvement in Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and Crime (as these represent large costs to the state). Scott (2001) has shown that costs of antisocial behaviour caused by individuals who were seriously antisocial as children were ten times higher than the costs for those who were not. If it can be shown that pupils who attend alternative provision are more likely to gain qualifications and are less likely to be NEET or involved in crime or ASB then there will likely be interest and commitment forthcoming from government.

At the same time as recognising and taking on board aspects of the above, this thesis will also critique this position by arguing that these outcomes can be considered as rooted in the need for a new outworking of social control due to the erosion of family and work values by laissez faire capitalism and the undermining of social institutions by globalisation (Schram, 2002). Although Schram discusses these ideas in the context of welfare reform it is clear that there are connections to schooling when we consider the arguments regarding the production of docile workers who will “cheerfully work under the more privileged elements of the population while accepting low pay for demeaning work” (Schram, 2002, p234). He goes on to assert that because of these requirements the “art of subject construction becomes itself a valued commodity” (Schram, 2002, p239), thus the emerging proliferation of occupations seeking to teach individuals to care for themselves – here alternative provision will have some questions to answer regarding its practice since it is often considered a therapeutic route for the child for whom mainstream education has not been appropriate. This leads to the consideration below of what success with pupils who attend alternative provision schooling

involves.

### **3.2 Schooling**

It is important to understand alternative provision in the wider context of schooling so this section considers a brief history of schooling in the UK and the idea of the inevitable and pure functions of schooling. The inevitable functions will be connected to the current state of play in the schooling system, both in terms of their relation to inequality and the connection between schooling and economic outcomes. The pure functions of schooling will be explored by considering progressive education and the philosophy of education more generally.

#### **3.2.1 History and the functions of schooling**

Three recurring themes found woven through the history of schooling in the UK have influenced and guided its development: the interests of industry and more recently educating children to become citizens, the interests of the church and the restoration of religion and morals, and those who have sought to understand how to best educate children with a focus on the personal development of each child (see Morrish, 1970). Or, to express these three themes more simply; socialisation, the church and education. Despite the considerable influence of the church in the beginning stages of the development of schooling in the UK – the founding of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.) in 1698 began the charity school movement and the founding (in 1785) and rapid expansion of the Sunday school movement represented the beginnings of popular education (Morrish, 1970) – its involvement in the debate has waned in recent times and has left socialisation and education as the key sites of discussion concerning schooling. We can see these two themes when Willis (1986) outlines schooling as having two foci, the “inevitable functions of education in relation to selection and gate-keeping for production and the economy” and “the ‘pure’ functions of education in keeping alive and transmitting inherited and new forms of knowledge about the world and about the human condition in it” (p167). These two functions are important to



understand alternative provision in its historical and cultural context. They can be summarised as follows:

1. Schools produce the citizens of the future and thus are required to instil the values and beliefs the current political order deem to be missing from society and or needed for the citizen of the future. We saw this played out when New Labour introduced citizenship education to the curriculum in 2002 and when Michael Gove introduced a new measure of league table performance for all schools in 2010 by implementing the English Baccalaureate which requires English, Maths, Two Sciences, a Foreign Language (including Classical Greek or Latin) and either Geography or History.
2. The kind of citizens schools are required to produce, and therefore the functions they are required to perform, are also tied into the needs of industry and the economy. We can see in Morrish (1970) that this tie has been close historically but since the late 1970's a discourse has taken shape which seeks to blame failures in education for economic decline (see Parsons, 1999 or Gleeson, 1992).
3. The reproduction of social boundaries (clearly never made explicit as a function of education but many would recognise its existence) – it is important to recognise that parliament is disproportionately inhabited by politicians who have attended private school and or Oxford or Cambridge university (essentially representing the rich and privileged) and who are therefore liable to perpetuate class divisions (even if they would not name them as such – we are all middle class now!). This also links to the history of politics and government being closely linked to aristocracy and there having never been a revolution in this country in which the working classes took control; rather, the ruling classes have shifted their politics and policies just enough whenever it has been necessary so as to be able to maintain control of government. Although schools are used to

reproduce social norms it is noted that they are also the site of production of new social relations, especially regarding social change and interaction with new technologies (Willis, 2003).

The 'pure' functions can be stated more succinctly and are those which will be considered as to do with education in its fullest sense. This includes 'keeping alive and transmitting inherited and new forms of knowledge about the world and about the human condition in it' (Willis, 1986, p167) and, perhaps more importantly, encourages and inspires a desire to learn and sees intrinsic value in the process of learning.

The current policy discourse relating to schools appears, perhaps inevitably, to be becoming further weighted towards the 'inevitable' functions. The balance between the inevitable and pure functions has ebbed and flowed over the course of recent governments. During New Labour's years in power two projects are worth noting: Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning most clearly links to instilling values and beliefs and creating the citizens of the future but could also be considered as looking to perform some of the 'pure' functions; and Creative Partnerships which are perhaps more aligned to the 'pure' functions of education but also connect into the needs of industry and economy. From 2010-15 the coalition government were in power. Michael Gove's flagship educational policies led to the massive expansion of the academies programme and the free schools project. It is argued that both of these allow for greater freedom within schools with the disapplication of the national curriculum which could potentially lead to a greater outworking of the 'pure' functions of schooling. However alongside this, the introduction of the English Baccalaureate as a measure of success means that this freedom is found within some very strict boundaries. More recently, Nicky Morgan has taken the reigns as Secretary of State for Education and in May 2015 the Conservative party were elected as a majority government. Current priorities include the further expansion of 'free schools',

the toughening up of examinations – particularly English and Maths so as to be in line with high performing PISA (the Programme for International Student Assessment) countries, and the forced conversion of mediocre/coasting schools to academy status.

The expansion of academy status and development of free schools is fragmenting the UK's education system to a degree not seen in decades, perhaps even centuries (Ball, 2013). As such, it is not overstating to say that schooling is in a state of flux. However, Gleeson has argued that there is "no 'golden age' of schooling against which modern judgements about standards make sense, and that many of the contemporary issues most complained about (anti-industrial attitudes, truancy, indiscipline etc) have their origins in historical and structural contradictions which have always characterised the beleaguered relations between state, family, education and economy" (Gleeson, 1992, p441-442). With this in mind it is of the utmost importance that throughout this thesis the two functions of education (firstly as educating citizens – socialisation into the values and norms of society and preparation for working life, and secondly as inspiring and instilling the inherent value of learning) are kept in mind. Willis' language connotes that the inevitable functions will always be present in a state schooling system. The question to be addressed is therefore about the nature of the connection between schooling and the outcomes sought by the inevitable functions. They are clearly seen in the outcomes prioritised by policy: qualifications, the focus on young people not in education employment or training (NEET) and the focus on young people moving into further and higher education. The following will first explore educational inequality and young people's responses in school and beyond. This will be followed by an in depth discussion of the connection between schooling and economic outcomes; the rationale so often used by those focussed on qualifications and NEET statistics. This will lead onto a consideration of the pure functions of schooling and will involve a consideration of progressive educational practice and robust

educational philosophy.

### **3.2.2 Educational inequality and young people's responses**

Inequality has been an on-going and major strand of educational research. It has been considered through a variety of lenses; the material environment, parental attitudes, child-rearing studies, culture and community, and linguistic development and social learning (Ball, 1986). This strand of research seeks to address the question of why pupils from working class backgrounds perform less well than their middle class peers of similar ability. It is helpful to start with the seminal work of Paul Willis. In 'Learning to Labour' (1977), he explores the role of the working class 'lads' in their resistance to schooling and their transition to working class jobs on the shop floor. What was so ground breaking about Willis' study was the way in which it drew together cultural production and social reproduction into a coherent overall picture. It has been noted that the 'lads' perceived themselves as in possession of power and control over their own existence. However this exercise of resistance led them to a life on the shop floor and to the reproduction of the very system they were resisting in the first place (Gordon, 1984). Willis uses the term 'partial penetration' to describe the way in which the 'lads' had recognised the limits and structure of the social context in which they found themselves but had not fully worked this through to a political response which would have challenged the system itself. Gordon references Marx along these lines; "men make their own history, but ... do not make it just as they please" (Marx, 1962 in Gordon, 1984, p113). This position which supports the integration of agency and structure will be enhanced by the use of Bourdieu's field theory (see chapter 5).

In a paper written in 2003 and entitled 'Foot Soldiers of Modernity' Willis updates his position on cultural production in schools and explores three waves of modernisation which inform an articulation of the current position of schooling (see also Smyth and Hattam, 2004). He sees the first wave of modernisation as the top down introduction of state schemes of schooling, this

was followed by the transition to a post-industrial society and then a move to a global commodity and electronic society. Willis connects school resistance to the first, disaffection to the second and 'cultural expression' to the third wave of modernisation. He sees an intrinsic link between economic change and change within the education system. All three of these waves must be kept in mind when considering a young person's experience of schooling.

#### **3.2.2.1 Wave one: State schemes of schooling**

School resistance connects to state schemes directed at improving competitiveness by raising the skill level of industrial workers. Resistance is the other face of the coin that is compulsory schooling. As Gleeson has noted, truancy is intimately connected to school compulsion where "education for all is required by law" (Gleeson, 1992, p438). The question posed to this system of schooling by the 'lads' in Willis' original study was; 'if we are destined for the shop floor then why should we engage with schooling on your terms?'. Unfortunately, as Willis notes, in challenging the system in this way they ended up reinforcing the system and their trajectory towards employment on the shop floor pushing aside all other potential career paths. Willis' study was grounded in an understanding of class. However in recent years policy discourse has moved towards a construction of classrooms as classless. This leads to the argument that if teachers are skilled then social context, i.e. class background, is unimportant. Reay argues that this is a fallacy and that there remain powerful remnants of schooling as "a palliative designed to contain and pacify rather than to educate and liberate" (Reay, 2006, p293), and of a system which valorises middle rather than working class capital (Ball, 2003 in Reay, 2006). As argued by Willis, school resistance tied to an understanding of class must continue to be kept in mind when considering educational inequality today.

#### **3.2.2.2 Wave two: The post-industrial society**

Disaffection is the product of the transition to a post-industrial society and is distinct from the active resistance noted above. It is bought about by the transition from an economy where skilled and semi-skilled industrial work was

widely available to a situation where work is often insecure and youth unemployment is high. The move to an economy based on a proliferation of short-term, dead-end service sector employment alongside white collar jobs which for many are simply dislocated from their experience of the world. The question posed by disaffected pupils becomes; 'what is the point of schooling if all that is visible on the horizon is insecure, low pay employment interspersed with bouts of unemployment?'. The post-industrial society disrupts and uproots young people from their culturally embedded expectations, the link from resistance to an emancipatory political project, even if only partially realised by the 'lads' in Willis' original study, is deconstructed. Working class masculinity is uprooted from a path which traditionally involved bread-winner power and well respected manual labour in which one could be proud. Willis notes that this destabilising can lead to, amongst other things, heavy sexism or 'hyper-masculinity' (Mac an Ghaill, 1996).

In 1986 Willis wrote a paper entitled, 'Unemployment: the final inequality' in which he focussed in on the fact of mass (long term) youth unemployment seeing this as an overwhelmingly working class and black working class issue. He suggested that it was no longer possible to consider the education system to have a positive role in mobility and economic equality, arguing that the education system had undergone a decoupling from the labour process/occupational structure (Willis 1986). Ten years later, a 1996 study of young people who had left formal education and had not entered training or employment suggested that: "The motivation of these young people to participate in school would be greatly enhanced if the relationships between education and jobs were made more transparent to them" (Rees et al., 1996, p231-232). Here again is seen the disconnection between education and jobs in a post-industrial economy. A further ten years later, in 2006, Furlong considered this issue again. By this time the use of the term 'NEET' to denote young people not in education, employment or training had become common parlance. He

argued that 'NEET' conveyed an inherent assumption of choice, not recognising the reality that although some included by the definition were choosing, many others were in no position to control their situation. As such, the definition needed to recognise:

“the extent to which patterns of labour demand in the new economy are failing to provide the opportunities for long-term security for large numbers of young people. Only then can we start to address the welfare and training needs of new members of the modern labour force.” (Furlong, 2006, p567)

Furlong argued that the simple dualism between employment and unemployment was unsuitable for the post-industrial economy which for many involves low pay, low skill, insecure employment and that the descriptor of 'NEET' goes nowhere near recognising the complexity of this situation (see also Smyth and Hattam, 2004 and Fevre, 2011). Since 2006 the usage of 'NEET' has become even more commonplace – a 'Newsbank' UK newspaper search for 'NEET' undertaken on 29/04/2015 showed 99 results in 2006, rising to 248 in 2009 and then to 373 in 2012. The number of NEET is calculated by considering the number of young people not in education or training and cross referencing it with numbers from the labour force survey to calculate figures for those who are in addition unemployed or economically inactive (see technical note in DfE, 2015). This measure does not get at the new complexities of the labour market which Furlong and others describe and it is clear that disaffection resulting from the move to a post-industrial economy is still part of the overall picture, even more so given the raising of the school leaving age to 18.

### **3.2.2.3 Wave three: Global commodity and electronic society**

Cultural expression connects to the global commodity and electronic society because pupils are on the forefront of change or, as Willis puts it, they are the foot soldiers of modernity. An economic expectation would be that commodities would be controlled by those with greater financial power, but this

is simplistic. Willis attributes this to a process he describes as the 'acculturation of consumer items'. This is about creativity and about investing items with (new) meaning rather than taking them at face value. Working class young people are on the front line of this process and given their starting position are likely to be engaged tooth and nail in the cut and thrust of developing and negotiating culture. This is a fight they will often lose given their position in terms of power. The question posed by young people in this situation is; 'given that everything is uncertain how can I best compete in this moment for status with the resources I have to hand?'. Mac an Ghaill and Haywood (2011) capture this well in recognising that the move to a global commodity and electronic culture has seen a shift from the valorisation to the pathologisation of working class culture. There has also been a move towards identifying class characteristics becoming aesthetic and located in culture (see also Jones, 2011). Similarly masculinity has become something which can be achieved through work on the body or written onto the body via consumerism – the consumption of "cultural forms such as alcohol, football, violence, aggressive sexualities" (Mac an Ghaill and Haywood, 2011, p736). In a paper entitled 'NEET and tidy pathways, the missing middle' Roberts (2011) writes about the experiences of young men working in the retail sector in which it is possible once more to see the dynamics of the commodity and electronic culture. In considering young men in the retail sector the study highlights the experiences of those not captured by the 'NEET' label and brings a level of nuance to the fast and slow track to adult life dualism. The fast track suggests moving into work and adult life quickly after compulsory education due to a lack of resources to choose otherwise; the slow track, to be able to take ones time in exploring opportunities (often educational because of the expansion of HE) before moving on into the world of work and adult life. Roberts summarised the experiences of the young men as follows:

"The young men in the present study are taking a route that is very much working-class based on their location in the employment structure, yet



perhaps upper-working class based on the ‘white-collar’ nature of their jobs. They get by, sometimes comfortably, and often enjoy their life as active consumers.” (Roberts, 2011, p35).

It is possible to see that the wave two move to a post-industrial society is reflected in the nature of the work being undertaken, though the retail nature of the work under consideration also connects to wave three. It is the commodity and electronic society which is reflected in the ‘white-collar’ aspirational nature of their work and in the young men’s enjoyment of their lives in the moment as active consumers. Recognition of the importance of the commodity and electronic culture is therefore highly relevant to any consideration of young people in compulsory schooling and beyond.

#### ***3.2.2.4 The three waves of modernisation and status systems in schools***

In addition to race, class and gender Willis notes that there are several status systems in play in schools. The categories of status negotiation Willis notes are; the official academic system which broadly reinforces material conditions external to the school; team sports, sexual attractiveness and bodily hardness at times overlap but are also perceived as connected to status in their own right; opposition to authority is another status system in play; and, patterns of cultural consumption. Having outlined the above Willis suggests that conflict is ensured in “a complex microecology, requiring considerable bravery and skill” (Willis, 2003, p408). It is possible once more to recognise the waves of modernisation in connection to the above. Alongside the official academic system; opposition to authority connects to the first wave – compulsory schooling; team sports, sexual attractiveness and bodily hardness connect to the second – post-industrial society; and, patterns of cultural consumption to the third – the global commodity and electronic society. These status systems will be reflected in the findings of this thesis, particularly in relation to the capital at play within mainstream schooling.

### **3.2.3 Connecting schooling and economic outcomes**

To reflect on the role of schooling in relation to labour market transitions and social mobility the work of Bowles and Gintis (1976, 2002) on the structure and purpose of education will be considered. This will be followed by an exploration of social mobility and the work of Goldthorpe (2012) regarding a more nuanced view than is often present in the literature when social mobility is discussed. Finally, consideration will be given to the nature of career development using the work of Hodgkinson (2008).

#### ***3.2.3.1 The structure and purpose of schooling***

When considering schooling and economic outcomes it is helpful to begin by considering the available research on the outcomes of schooling. The work of Bowles and Gintis is important for understanding which forms of capital (economic, cultural, social – see chapter 5) are important for success in the labour market. Their tour de force ‘Schooling in Capitalist America’ detailed connections between the education system and economic structure in America. They argued that the schooling system reinforced the unequal distribution of resources bought about by capitalism and that thoroughly different, democratic approaches to education were needed if society as a whole was going to move beyond this position (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). In a paper written 26 years later the authors consider their original arguments and position to have been strengthened by subsequent research. Their position is that there is intergenerational persistence in economic status, that social mobility is uncommon, and that IQ is unimportant as an inherited trait in this process. The effect of schooling on cognitive development does not account for the relationship found between a greater level of schooling and higher earnings: personality traits, rather than skills, determine labour market success (Bowles and Gintis, 2002). This can be accounted for in two ways. Either more schooling produces other traits which do impact on earnings (this is broadly the authors’ position) or more schooling is a possible choice for those who go on to earn more because social background (seeing additional schooling as a choice) and

economic resources (being in a position to finance this choice) matter.

Whichever of these options is closer to reality, it is non-cognitive traits which are of particular relevance for this study as a far broader conceptualisation of outcomes is what is needed when considering alternative provision schooling.

The authors quote a number of studies in relation to non-cognitive traits which connect to labour market success; one of these suggests industriousness, perseverance and leadership as important traits. These traits are judged to be four times better than test scores, twice as good as family background and 1.5 times better than years of schooling as a predictor of earnings. Non-cognitive traits can even explain the variability in labour market success (in terms of reward) which is unaccounted for when considering individuals from similar backgrounds with the same years of schooling. As well as highlighting non-cognitive traits from other studies the authors themselves suggest orientation towards the future, strength of personal efficacy, and interactions with others as important traits. Alongside this assertion they report on an overarching analysis of studies which “suggests that a substantial portion of the returns to schooling are generated by effects or correlates of schooling that are substantially unrelated to the cognitive capacities measured on the available tests” (Bowles and Gintis, 2002, p9).

Taking these two findings together: that non-cognitive skills explain difference in earnings when social background and level of schooling are the same; and, that schooling generates non-cognitive effects, it is possible to say it is likely that non-cognitive traits are learnt in school but not *solely* in school. Bowles and Gintis account for the role of schooling in this process by a model of cultural transmission. This model assumes vertical transmission of cultural traits from parents to offspring which are then either confirmed or challenged when children come into contact with teachers. If traits are challenged by coming into contact with a teacher with a different trait then oblique transmission may

occur. Oblique transmission will be mediated by the pupil's assessment of the situation and the rewards and sanctions connected to both traits. Reflecting on this process the authors suggest that:

“Schooling may thus promote prosocial traits even if these traits are not individually advantageous. By like reasoning, schooling can also promote traits that are advantageous to one group (the group determining the structure of schooling) even if they are not generally advantageous” (Bowles and Gintis, 2002, p13).

The internalisation of cultural traits of whatever kind is an important point for consideration. The presence of such traits within school environments leading to the potential for internalisation specifically raises the question of the nature of the traits at play in any schooling environment, traits which any young person who is a part of that environment may well internalise. This will be considered in depth in the findings when the habitus necessary for each field, mainstream and alternative provision, is discussed.

#### ***3.2.3.2 Social mobility and schooling***

Having considered the role of schooling in the development of non-cognitive traits important for labour market success; and, given that intergenerational persistence in economic status was found by Bowles and Gintis, it is important to consider social mobility and its relationship to education. Social mobility is connected to many other narratives including non-cognitive skills and the role of education. The aim of the following is not to dismiss non-cognitive skills which are clearly important for providing a wider conceptualisation of outcomes of schooling. It is however important to make sure that any consideration of non-cognitive skills keeps in mind the wider picture and does not, somewhat simplistically, conceptualise them as an answer to problems of social mobility.

Current policy thinking is reflected in a recent publication from the all-party

parliamentary group (APPG) on Social Mobility written in conjunction with CentreForum (a think tank) and Character Counts (a 'social research and innovation company'). It is understandable for the APPG publication to express that "social and emotional 'skills' underpin academic and other success" and to call for non-cognitive skills to be placed "at the very heart of the drive to improve social mobility" (Paterson et al., 2014, p10). The publication goes on to recognise that for those entering the labour market from the late 70s to the early 90s the influence of non-cognitive skills on outcomes had increased dramatically. The connection is made between social class background and likelihood of developing these skills with those from less affluent upbringings being less likely to develop in this way. The traits specifically mentioned in the publication include; motivation, curiosity, conscientiousness, application to task, self-esteem, personal efficacy and concentration. Poor discipline and lack of persistence are specifically named as traits which hamper labour market success. It is also reported that studies have "identified a clear link between non-cognitive abilities and school truancy and absenteeism, anti-social behaviour, vandalism, illegal drug use and general crime" (p14).

The overall argument of the publication runs as follows. Non-cognitive skills are becoming more important in the labour market and a lack of these skills is also connected to poor outcomes more generally. Those from more affluent backgrounds are more likely to develop these skills than their less affluent peers; and, that these skills can be taught and therefore should be front and centre when trying to address social mobility.

The critique of this argument begins by questioning why non-cognitive skills are becoming more important in the labour market. The answer to this question lies in the changing shape of the labour market over this time, the growth of unemployment and in particular youth unemployment – or to put it as covered above, the transition to a post-industrial society. Working class young people are

now in competition with their middle class peers for employment opportunities and, given the unequal power relationship at play in this situation, the opportunities disproportionately go to middle class young people. The underlying rationale for this relies on the emergence of non-cognitive skills as important to employers in the labour market. The reality will, of course, be more complex and multi-faceted than this articulation because of the interplay between individual and structural dynamics. However the argument that any consideration of social mobility should be grounded in the shape of the labour market is the key point to stress.

This is reinforced by considering the changing outcomes and roles of girls and young women in schooling and the labour market over recent years. Since the 1970's girls have outperformed boys in schooling. Alongside this women have seen a substantial increase in participation in the labour market, rising from 56% in 1971 to 69% in 2009 (Giddens and Sutton, 2013). Again, it will be more complex than simple causation either way. However this thesis sees positive academic outcomes as broadly grounded in changes to the labour market as opposed to the other way around (similarly Fevre, 2011).

Given the above argument, where the APPG publication refers to “highlighting the importance of behavioural and psychological factors in the intergenerational transmission of inequality” (Paterson et al., 2014, p14) it could be summarised as follows: It is because a child's parents have not had middle class experiences and opportunities and do not present middle class behaviour that they are also likely to deviate from these experiences, opportunities and behaviour. Or, more simply, ‘it's because they are not middle class that they aren't middle class’. It is striking that the authors of the publication feel the need to recognise that an “instinctive reaction for some might be to question whether these key non-cognitive abilities are simply inherent or genetic and therefore out of reach for any initiatives intended to develop them” (Paterson et al., 2014, p14). This sails

perilously close to narratives of the inherent (genetic) inferiority of those who are born into poor households.

Social mobility has become dominated by one reading of the ‘problem’ – that of declining social mobility. This is the view that is drawn upon in the APPG publication and is based on the work of a single group of economists. This reading is arguably flawed and Goldthorpe (2012) has written in depth about the way in which this reading does not do justice to the overall situation. It is based on a single stream of research rather than all the available findings and fails to distinguish between absolute and relative rates of social mobility. Absolute rates of social mobility refer to actual proportions of individuals who move between class grouping over their life course. Relative rates of social mobility denote the probabilities of individuals from certain class backgrounds moving to different destinations. For a meritocracy (where society’s rewards go to those who most deserve them) to exist relative rates of social mobility would need to be high. In the years after the second world war absolute social mobility increased (due to the expansion of managerial and professional positions) but then levelled out while relative social mobility has remained unchanged back to the inter war years. Consequently, as was found by Bowles and Gintis, intergenerational persistence of class position is high. Similarly, persistence of wealth, based on surname analysis is also high (Clark and Cummins, 2013).

The consensus view of declining social mobility constructs education as an important remedy, but its ability to ameliorate the problem is unclear.

Goldthorpe suggests that:

“What the historical evidence suggests is, then, that those who suppose it possible to modify the class mobility regime directly through educational policy overlook the regime’s important self-maintaining properties: i.e. properties that stem from the capacity of families with greater resources

to use these resources specifically in reaction to situations in which some threat to their positions might arise” (Goldthorpe, 2012, p18)

From this it is argued that if social mobility is the aim then it is wider economic policy that should be in focus; and, that a greater level of equality of opportunity and outcome within education should be pursued for its own sake. Goldthorpe argues that educational policy can play a role in “shaping the pattern of future economic development” (p21) but a broad, structural understanding of the role of schooling should primarily be grounded on a robust educational philosophy. This will be explored below.

### ***3.2.3.3 The nature of career development***

If schooling in its current form does little for social mobility, and if economic outcomes are largely determined by the shape of the labour market, the question of the best way to conceptualise careers becomes pertinent. Hodkinson’s work (2008) on ‘Careership’ is relevant here. This theory is underpinned by Bourdieu’s field theory, which has also become the primary framework for interpreting the findings of this research project. Careership has three dimensions.

The first dimension, horizons for action, locates the individual in their social context and considers their relationship to the position they inhabit. The notion of a horizon is helpful in that many things will be visible but some will be more discernible than others. There will also be a wider world that is not visible to the individual from the current position. Hodkinson recognises individuals’:

“positions within and in relation to the field and their actions and dispositions contribute to the on-going formation and reformation of the field” (Hodkinson, 2008, p5).

This statement recognises that whilst an individual’s context limits their



opportunities to those within their 'horizons for action', they also play an active part in the perpetuation, and sometimes the disruption, of the current order.

The decision making process, the second dimension, was shaped by what was termed 'pragmatic rationality'. This understood that decisions made within ones horizons for action are not simply rational, they are more than this, they are embodied by the individual and as such will be shaped by "practical, physical, emotional and affective aspects" (Hodkinson, 2008, p9). Decisions are understood to often be based on partial information, usually from trusted individuals rather than official sources. It was also recognised that it is not infrequent for good fortune to play a part in which decisions are made. Finally, the resources available to an individual very much shape the individual's ability to influence their options when it comes to careers.

The final dimension, routines and turning points, views careers as something to be understood over the long term where periods of stability (routines) will be broken up with occasional moments of significant career change (turning points). Importantly, drawing on the work of Strauss (1962), Hodkinson suggests that routines and turning points would likely only be discernible in retrospect; and, that rather than turning points being a moment in time or an event, they would likely involve build up to a decision and the working through of the outcomes, quite possibly over a number of months. Reflecting on his more recent research, Hodkinson suggests that careers are "progressively constructed by positioned people, as part of their participation in various career-related fields" (Hodkinson, 2008, p11). This recognises that central to career construction is learning, both formal and informal, "an integral part of living, not a separate process that takes place in a separate context" (Hodkinson, 2008, p11).

Hodkinson's careership theory provides a helpful starting point for beginning to conceptualise young people's experiences of alternative provision. As such, its

underlying structure – Bourdieu’s field theory – will be examined in detail in chapter 5. It does however in addition provide a number of direct connections. ‘Horizons for action’ lead to the idea that alternative provision could play a part in bringing into focus things which before were blurry and barely visible. Trusted individuals who can end up playing a part in one’s career progression may well form a part of a young person’s experience of alternative provision. Finally the experience of attending alternative provision itself may well, on reflection, be considered either part of or itself a turning point in a young person’s life course. It is helpful to recognise that even if this is true it may well be indiscernible until later on when the young person has become a young adult, thus the value of interviewing young adults in this research project.

### **3.3 Progressive education and educational philosophy**

If it is indeed the pursuit of economic policy which will make a difference to the outcomes often sought from education, then what does schooling look like if education is pursued for its own sake, pursued to encourage the ‘pure functions’ of schooling as Willis would put it?. Progressive education, discussed below, provides an answer to this question.

This argument connects to the similarities, already mentioned above, between alternative provision schooling and progressive education. Alternative provision exists outside of mainstream schooling and therefore has the freedom to work differently. Put another way, it could be said that alternative provision schooling is both constrained and free in different ways to mainstream schooling, this will be considered in the findings of this thesis. From the literature reviewed, alternative provision seems to embody a great deal of practice which is similar to progressive education. This is encouraging and also leads to the focus of this project – considering in depth the differences between mainstream and alternative provision schooling and the impact that the kind of education which alternative provision embodies has on the young people who attend.

### **3.3.1 Progressive education**

Progressive Education is not a single well understood academically accepted concept or methodology. It is a term that can be used for a wide variety of movements and approaches and has been likened to a child centred approach (although this is still rather ambiguous and contested) (Brehony, 2000). Another way progressive education has been understood is as juxtaposed to 'traditional' education with the foundation of these respectively being a belief that people are basically good and in need of freedom or bad and in need of discipline. This view connects these approaches back to Hobbes, people are by nature aggressive and anti-social; and Rousseau, people have an inherent social nature and are inclined to cooperation and altruism but corrupted by the pressure of socio-economic advance (Carr, 2003).

As progressive education is such a fluid topic, for the purpose of this thesis it will be defined by drawing out common themes of the practice followed by a number of educationalists who were active in the inter-war years as these continue to be the most influential voices in this field. The educationalists selected are Susan Isaacs of the Malting House School, Maria Montessori, Rudolf Steiner and A. S. Neill of Summerhill. Some would place these practitioners as outside a definition of progressive education, but there is enough consistency in their educational thought to draw out a coherent narrative.

Five themes are picked out as being common to Isaacs, Montessori, Steiner and Neill, and three further themes not common to all but important within the practice of individuals and relevant to the arguments in this thesis. The five main themes are freedom, choice in learning, relationships built on equality of respect and power, the presence of activity, and psychological methods.

#### ***Freedom***

Steiner and Montessori showed an interest in 'structured freedom'. Steiner placed "an emphasis on not just leaving children to discover but of giving them

structure and guidance to facilitate their self expression” (Edmunds, 2004, p71). Montessori’s ‘method’ was based around the freedom of the child to discover and experience learning but also included a highly structured learning environment with many pieces of learning material which were expected to be respected. In contrast Isaacs believed that it was of the utmost importance that the child was the leader in any learning experience. She would only introduce new apparatus once children had shown an interest in a particular area and begun to ask questions which could be answered by its introduction - in this way it was possible to utilise the child’s developing sense of self and responsibility to enable self-discipline whilst protecting self-esteem (Willan, 2011, p209). Neill’s practice was such that the children at his school were not forced to learn anything but were given the opportunity to attend lessons if they so wished and if they did not attend there were no sanctions. When students first started at Summerhill they would often choose to play and attend no lessons for days, weeks or even months but in time they would begin to show an interest in particular areas and then focus their energy and time on learning about these. Considering these four practitioners there can be no doubt that freedom is an important, if not the most important theme in progressive education. The belief in the need for freedom, as outlined above is rooted in a belief that control only damages children and that they must be allowed freedom to be able to learn to live responsibly within the world. Indeed Montessori believed that freedom in the classroom would lead to healthy students without the anxiety that fear brings.

### ***Choice in learning***

The second theme stems from freedom in that it is the freedom to learn what the pupil is interested in. This is most clearly displayed in Neill’s practice but is also present in a slightly more structured form for Isaacs and Montessori who both provide an environment in which the pupil can explore and discover their interests. Isaacs saw the child as leader in their learning and Montessori regarded the child as an explorer with an emphasis on discovery and experience

in learning. Steiner comes closest to prescription however the methods used within the classroom certainly allow for freedom to learn in a variety of ways with an emphasis on the self-expression of the child. This is clarified by the belief that it was the teacher's role to "educate that the creative in us may find utterance" (Edmunds, 2004, p75). Steiner perhaps understood something of the enjoyment and potency of learning from someone who is captivated by what they are explaining; he sought to structure lessons in this way.

### ***Equal relationships***

The third theme is relationships, based on equality of respect and power, found in progressive settings. Isaacs speaks of the "easy, friendly relation between children and teacher" (Isaacs, 1932, p20) and Steiner of giving structure and guidance to facilitate self-expression (Edmunds, 2004). For Montessori, the teacher was to have a relationship of support towards independence with the student and was to use individual observation as their main tool for understanding the child's needs and how best to support them towards independence in learning. At Summerhill both staff and pupils had equal rights. Just as no one was allowed to walk on the lid of his grand piano, so Neill was open to punishment if he borrowed a child's bicycle without asking permission first – all matters regarding punishment were settled by vote at the weekly meeting where, as Neill says, "the vote of a child of six counts for as much as my vote does" (Neill, 1968, p24). This equality between staff and pupils and Neill's approach to his students is nicely summed up with his one commandment for teachers and parents: "thou shalt be on the child's side" (Neill, 1968, p116). For the children Neill was not an authority figure but an equal. This equality between staff and pupils meant visitors could often not tell between the two and led Neill to say "It is true: the feeling of unity is that strong when children are approved of. There is no deference to a teacher as a teacher. Staff and pupils have the same food and have to obey the same community laws" (Neill, 1968, p26). Whether it is a teacher in a Steiner school seeking to draw out the inherent creativity of their pupils, or pupils and staff having the same voting

rights at the weekly Summerhill meetings, we find relationships between staff and pupils which rely on respect and equal rights rather than coercion and discipline.

### ***Active learning***

The fourth theme is the continual presence of activity in progressive educational settings. There is usually an underlying principle that students should be free to move around the classroom. Central to Montessori education was the move to free children from desks and whole class teaching into an independent, educational environment in which the student was, not entirely free to do as they pleased, but was free and encouraged to “become master of himself and to be able to work independently” (O’Donnell, 2007, p12). Alongside this freedom to move around whilst learning there is often a focus on the practical, “The gifts of speech and song and dance...The pleasure of making things, of free expression in dramatic movement, in chalk and paint” (Isaacs, 1932, p20). At Summerhill there were no lessons in the afternoon, this free time was used to play but also for wood work, games, sport, dancing and other activities.

### ***Psychological methods***

Finally we find a fascination with psychological methods. All four practitioners reviewed sought to understand the child and from this point to work with them to support their learning and development. Isaacs believed that role-play enabled the child to act out their inner psycho-drama and the teachers role in this was to observe and reflect on what they saw (Willan, 2011). Montessori saw the need to nurture pupil’s “physical, psychological, social, emotional, aesthetic, and spiritual needs in order to cultivate their unique personalities” (O’Donnell, 2007, p35). Neill only practiced psychological methods with some, but commented that all students at Summerhill made positive progress whether they received this special intervention or not!

### **3.3.2 A robust educational philosophy**

It is helpful to locate this discussion of progressive education in the wider context of educational philosophy. It has been noted that:

“the core legacy of progressive education, which critiques traditional notions of education and the nature of knowledge, affirms the centrality of democracy as a way of life and insists on the development of young people and adults as whole persons” (Darling and Norbenbo, 2003 in Fielding, 2011, p186)

This holistic approach, focused on drawing out and facilitating the humanity inherent in young people is positioned as critiquing traditional notions of education. However Carr sees traditional and progressive approaches as pursuing similar goals:

“In short, an educated person is one who can make connected sense of things – not for any immediate practical purpose, but for the sake of a meaningfully unified, ordered and/or directed life ... on this fundamental question there is little or no difference between an educational traditionalist like Peters and a progressive like Dewey” (Carr, 2007, p5)

Perhaps it is really that progressive education is at odds with neo-liberal approaches in education. In taking a holistic approach, progressive education pushes against the pursuit of economic outcomes and the promotion of management and codified approaches to schooling (Pring, 2013). Like Carr above, Pring goes on to summarise:

“learning to become human, in its many dimensions, is the focus of education” (Pring, 2013, p32)

His discussion makes reference to Oakeshott’s view that it is the teacher’s role to initiate their students into the ‘best that has been thought and said’ in the world. He suggests that this misses the connection of the learner to their wider

community, and side-lines practical and creative traditions. Pring is correct to make these connections, as the 'best that has been thought and said' is arguably negotiated by class interests. How the learner connects to their wider community is fundamental to education and is the stream of thought developed next.

### **3.3.3 Emancipatory and political education**

Developing the theme of learning to be human, John Macmurray suggests:

“[T]he first priority of education – if by education we mean learning to be human – is learning to live in personal relation to other people. Let us call it learning to live in community.” (in Fielding, 2011, p183)

This view of education as learning to be human in connection to the wider community in which one is located leads to a focus on relationships (see also, Carr, 2003b) which, in Fielding's view “enable us to ‘re-see’ each other as persons rather than as role occupants” (Fielding, 2011, p186). It is this ability to reflect and more importantly reassess which is so important when it comes to individuals succeeding in their current context and being able to navigate whatever life brings. It is from this secure base that the nature of teaching and learning, or pedagogy, should be explored:

“pedagogic thought and practice that take seriously the nature of the relationship between teacher and students and also between the individual and the wider social, communal and political contexts which frame their present and future flourishing.” (Fielding, 2011, p177)

As such, there is a strong argument that education should enable young people to understand their social context and positioning within it. Thus, developing a notion drawn from Hodgkinson above, expanding their horizons. Learning is an emancipatory process and will certainly have a political element in that it will set



young people up to understand and therefore be in a position to challenge the current order of things.

The work of Jeremy Wills connects this back to alternative provision. Working with young people who did not fit into the mainstream schools of his day:

“Jeremy Wills insisted that his own pioneering of a ‘shared responsibility’ approach over many years with different groups of ‘wild, neglected, undisciplined, over-disciplined and “dis-social” children’ had its justification not as ‘an efficient method of governing (a school), but because of its therapeutic value ... Shared responsibility is a corollary of the primary instrument which is the effort to make children feel they are loved’ (Wills 1948, p79).” (Fielding, 2011, p182)

By taking an essentially democratic approach Wills explicitly recognised and drew out the common humanity of the pupils with whom he was working. It is interesting to note that in addition to the work of Wills a number of the progressive educators named above began the work with young people who were marginalised from the mainstream options of the day. Reflecting on his early experiences with the pupils sent to him and reassessing what it was that made a difference to them, Neill writes:

“Most were problem children sent in despair by parents and schools – thieves, destroyers, bullies of both sexes. I ‘cured’ by analysis I thought, but discovered that the ones who refused to come to my analysis sessions were cured also, and had to conclude that freedom, not analysis, was the active agent.” (Neill, 1968, p9).

As noted above this freedom was found within a democratic self-governing community and as such very much reflects both the emancipation and

politicisation mentioned above, indeed with a group of pupils not dissimilar to the attendees of any alternative provision school.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

Having rebutted the notion that schooling should be pursued as leading to economic outcomes the argument set out in this chapter has led to a discussion of the pure functions of education. Education should revolve around learning how to live well together. In recognising that there are similarities between progressive education and alternative provision, it is suggested that alternative provision needs to be explored and conceptualised as a distinct form of schooling. This is a significant part of the focus of this thesis and will be considered in depth in the findings below.

It is also important to keep in mind that Willis names the inevitable functions of schooling as such because, in his view, they will always be present in a system initiated and maintained by the state. It is not disputed that this should be the case but it should be founded on best available arguments and information. Given that increased social mobility would be better achieved by pursuing broadly economic policies, what are the ways in which schooling can provide support to young people as they move into the world of adulthood and working life? It is the contention here that the work of Hodgkinson on 'Careership' should be connected to this question. As such, Bourdieu's 'field theory' (which underpins 'careership theory') will be used in the findings to explore this question.

## **4 Methodology**

This chapter examines the research design and process for this study. The aims and objectives of the project connected to two questions: firstly, the nature of alternative provision schooling, and secondly, its effect on pupils who attend. The chapter begins with a discussion of the nature of knowledge generation, and the ethical considerations that underpin the study. This will be followed by discussion of the research design and field work. Finally, the chapter will consider the analytical process.

### **4.1 On the generation of knowledge**

It is important to outline the distinction between methodology and methods. Methodology, or background thinking, involves consideration of the reality of the specific area of the social world to be investigated (ontology) and in light of this, the knowledge that the research process can generate about this area (epistemology). Ontology and Epistemology combine in methodology. Consideration of the specific area of the social world and what it is possible to know about it led to an understanding of what knowledge generation looks like in relation to the specific area of interest. This methodology, what it is considered can be known and therefore how to go about gathering and generating this knowledge, influences the specific research methods which are used in this process. Methods are the specific tools and devices used for gathering and generating this knowledge and can be considered to flow out of the methodology in that the data sought is considered to represent reality (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003). In turn they determine the sources which can be drawn upon (Grix, 2002). Practical considerations, theory (dominant / relevant ways of conceptualising the social world) and values (ethical considerations) also influence the research process (Bryman, 2012).

It is the researcher's position that alternative provision is part of an objective world which is known and understood through a process of social construction. In light of this, alternative provision can be considered to be a specific but

socially constructed reality in a state of continual flux. Some aspects of this reality will experience high levels of change while others will be relatively slow to evolve. As such, structures, patterns and relationships will exist which can be theorised even though they are liable to change over time. In fact, despite surface change, the underlying structures determined and negotiated through power relationships are relatively stable (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). We can provisionally describe these definitions, approaches and understandings and can elaborate upon them and some of their probable outcomes or trajectories over time. The provisional nature of what we can know is due to the continually shifting nature of the social world which is the focus of our investigation.

Methodology, or how to go about the generation of knowledge, flows from the researcher's understanding and experience of the specific reality of alternative provision. This is then informed, developed and challenged by engagement with others involved in this specific reality. This is essentially congruent with a grounded theory approach in that initial data – the researcher's experience of working in an alternative provision setting – has informed the research design and the structure and form of the actual methods used to gather data. This further data was then used to develop additional categories and refine existing ones culminating in a saturation of theoretical ideas – where further data collected, i.e. an additional interview, is unlikely to lead to any new theoretical insight (Glaser and Strauss, 2009).

In light of the researcher's ontological and epistemological position, notions such as Weber's ideal types (see Heckman, 1983) and Schultz's Typifications (see Wagner, 1968 and Kim and Berard, 2009) have been useful in the generation of knowledge. Though much, if not all, of social life is socially constructed it is possible to notice and draw out patterns and trends which can be considered at a theoretical level enabling the development of predictions which can be tested through the qualitative exploration of individual perceptions of that social world.

So the researcher's position is that social life is socially constructed based upon interactions in a real world and that these social constructions produce patterns, structures and relationships which, although in a continual state of flux, can be known and which are worked out in the objective world. In investigating and developing knowledge about these patterns, structures and relationships it is possible to develop explanatory theories from which it is possible to produce falsifiable predictions (see Popper, 1968). This is essentially a critical realist position in that it is possible to describe structures in the social world so long as they connect agency and structure in a meaningful way. The use of Bourdieu's field theory (see Chapter 5) meets this challenge, effectively fusing agency and structure by detailing both the objectified and embodied structuring of the field.

## **4.2 Ethics, Access and Bias**

### **4.2.1 Ethics**

Ethics in research is concerned with the avoidance of causing harm to anyone involved in the research and, as far as possible, making involvement in the research process a positive experience (Social Research Association, 2003 and Stuart and Barnes, 2005). It also involves consideration of any difficulties which may arise and a level of planning about how to deal with any challenges, especially disclosures of risk of harm to children and young people. At a formal level, ethical approval was sought and obtained from the university ethics committee and the necessary local authority.

#### **4.2.1.1 Consent**

It is recognised that young adults who participated in the research were potentially 'vulnerable' and interviews had the potential to raise sensitive topics or memories. Schooling plays a significant role in people's lives and those involved in the research were likely to have had difficult experiences.

Informed consent was obtained from all young adults involved in the study. This was achieved by using information sheets in conjunction with consent forms. Due to the on-going nature of consent, participants were able to withdraw from

the research process at any time without fear of reprisal. At the beginning of every interview each participant was reminded that if there are any questions or topics they did not want to discuss they were under no compulsion to do so and were free to ask to move on at any time. They were also informed of the researcher's duty to disclose if something they said gave reason to believe someone vulnerable may be at risk of significant harm.

The researcher's background working in alternative provision enabled a supportive and helpful rapport to be built with each participant thus minimising the impact of any potentially stressful topics.

#### ***4.2.1.2 Use of data and anonymity***

All data (notes, recordings and transcripts) were kept confidential. Electronic documents were password protected, hard copies of notes or transcripts were kept in a locked cabinet and all data will be destroyed six months after the completion of the study.

Any disclosure which suggested a child, young person or vulnerable adult was at risk of significant harm would first have been discussed with the person making the disclosure (the duty to inform was outlined at the beginning of each interview) before discussing with the researcher's supervisor (or supervisory team) and an appropriate course of action decided upon.

The names of alternative education settings, staff and young adults have not been identified. Data have been anonymised throughout and pseudonyms are used for all involved. In some cases the nature of what is available (activities / subjects) has been changed as in some instances only one organisation provides these services in the local area.

#### **4.2.2 Access**

The county within which the research took place is comprised of three local authorities. It is worth making the point here that the nature and extent of

provision in any location varies widely. As has been noted, “the existence of good quality AP in any one area is usually more a matter of luck than of any systematic planning by schools, PRUs or LAs” (Taylor, 2012, p5). As such, there was no expectation of this research being scalable to a full representation of the wider picture of alternative provision schooling. At the same time, there is no reason to think that the context is different in any significant way to other parts of the country, and to this extent the findings have wider relevance.

#### **4.2.2.1 Gatekeepers**

Gate keepers were used to gain the contact details of young adults whose involvement was sought. The gate keeper for each young adult was either a local authority (LA) contact or their old head of centre (some rather than all who responded to the online questionnaire – the questionnaire gave an option to opt into further involvement). Snowballing was also used to develop contacts. In these cases the gatekeeper became the young adult with whom the researcher had already established contact.

Some participating heads of provision were local authority employees (those who ran pupil referral units), thus it was necessary to gain additional approval from Local Authority 1 (LA 1). This was achieved by sending through the same documentation as used in the university ethics process. The approval of the local authority was found to be helpful when discussing involvement with providers who were initially cautious. In the case of Local Authority 3 (LA 3), the pupil referral unit had recently become an academy and it was therefore no longer necessary to gain consent from the local authority – although it was in the process of making contact to gain consent that this was discovered.

#### **4.2.2.2 Initial contact**

Initial contact with young adults was made by either the LA contact or their old head of centre. This involved a letter (pre written by the researcher unless the contact wished to write it in which case the necessary information to include was provided) being sent to the last contact address for the young adult. The letter

was sent along with an information sheet on the research and a stamp-addressed return postcard for young adults to use if they wished to opt out of the research. Two weeks after the initial letter had been sent the researcher contacted the head of centre / LA contact to access contact details (Name, address and contact number if available) for the young adults who had not opted out. The researcher proceeded to contact the young adults from this point onwards.

Towards the end of the field work one provider provided a number of contacts after speaking to young adults who had previously attended their centre. They talked through the details of the research and agreed with the young adults for their contact details to be passed on before doing so.

Initial contact was only made with young adults who the head / LA contact considered appropriate to be involved in the research (reasons for not including an ex pupil would be knowing that they had moved away from the area or would be unable to be involved in the research due to a language barrier or severe disability). The sample was expected to be all pupils who attended a provision five years ago (although this was expanded to 4 – 6 years and even beyond where helpful) and for whom a contact address / details were available. Due to the hard to access nature of the population snowballing was used where possible to develop further contacts.

#### **4.2.3 Bias**

The potential for bias must be considered, specifically in terms of what is perceived to be 'good' practice in the context of research where the researcher could be considered an 'insider'. It was important for the research to be designed to provide maximum opportunities for a range of types of provision to be included, and to ensure that, if at all possible, young people with a range of experiences be involved as participants.



Although the researcher's previous involvement and on-going relationships were certainly an advantage for this research they also brought limitations. Heads of provision who had had significant contact with the researcher were not included in the main sample but were used in the development stages as set out below. The researcher is on the management committee of the PRU in LA 1 and as such it was not considered appropriate to include these in the study alongside the other providers. It was however appropriate for this contact to be involved in the development of the survey and in making contact with young adults. Similarly, as the researcher used to work for and has a level of on-going relationship with one provider in the area, they were not included in the research but again, were involved in survey development and contacting young adults. However, other heads who work for the company in other locations were included.

Due to the researcher's previous and on-going positions it is possible to list a number of limitations and areas for potential bias in relation to the research aims:

- Respondents may not be willing to speak openly
- Respondents may wish to say what they think the researcher wants to hear
- Respondents may have had negative experience of the company the researcher worked for and thus be influenced by this in their response to the researcher / research
- The researcher may come to the research with preconceived ideas about how to do alternative provision and what works

It was important to be alert to these issues during the research process. The researcher continued to reflect, with supervision, on whether these issues were becoming pertinent to the research and of the four it is considered that the first

three did not become relevant at any point. That the researcher would come to the project with preconceived ideas about their chosen topic is always going to be a factor in a professional doctorate. But the ideas and findings put forth in this thesis have moved far beyond anything initially conceived.

#### **4.3 The context: alternative provision in the county**

Describing the pattern and nature of alternative educational provision is complex and as noted above, the existence of high quality alternative provision across the country is sporadic (Taylor, 2012). Reflecting on the number of providers it was possible to contact, the variety of what was on offer and the generally positive experiences relayed by participants it seems probable that the provision available in this county may well be of higher quality than would have been found elsewhere in the country. One possible explanation for this is the presence, in local authority one, of a pupil referral unit which has been judged as outstanding for three consecutive Ofsted inspections and which now plays a broader role in the market of local provision (see below). The county in which the research took place is made up of three unitary authorities, and the relevant characteristics of each will now be outlined.

Whilst the research was undertaken Local Authority One was in the process of merging the two existing pupil referral units on to one site to officially become one unit, while retaining two staff teams focussing on different strategies. One part of the PRU now focuses on a revolving door strategy aimed at getting pupils (mostly Year 9 and under) back into mainstream by supporting their development. The other team provides a route through to GCSEs and other qualifications for those who are not going to return to mainstream schooling. The PRU is also part of a wider set up which seeks to support and monitor alternative providers across the authority. This in part enables schools to be more confident about the alternative provision they commission which, as discussed above, is now part of the framework under consideration by Ofsted inspectors. In Local Authority Two, and just as the research began, there were a

number of developments including the closure of the local PRU, rationalisation of the service and the opening of a large new alternative provision free school to cater for up to 120 pupils. In Local Authority Three the PRU had recently converted to become an Alternative Provision Academy and a new Free School with a focus on an enhanced curriculum had opened.

The wider educational context of the local authorities is also relevant, in terms of understanding the population within alternative education and how this relates to wider research evidence.

The table below presents data regarding numbers of fixed period exclusions in the local authorities.

Figure 4.1 – Fixed period exclusions

	2010 – 11		2011 – 12		2012 – 13	
	State-funded secondary		State-funded secondary		State-funded secondary	
	Number of fixed period exclusions	Percentage of the school population	Number of fixed period exclusions	Percentage of the school population	Number of fixed period exclusions	Percentage of the school population
<b>ENGLAND</b>	<b>271,980</b>	<b>8.40</b>	<b>252,210</b>	<b>7.85</b>	<b>215,560</b>	<b>6.75</b>
<b>Region</b>	<b>29,710</b>	<b>7.71</b>	<b>29,520</b>	<b>7.76</b>	<b>21,720</b>	<b>5.76</b>
LA3	674	4.60	788	5.37	544	3.71
LA2	1,467	6.71	1,367	6.35	1,127	5.27
LA1	783	6.32	950	7.57	815	6.44

All three local authorities are below the national figure at all points with the regional average also consistently lower than the national average. LA1 and LA2 have a higher rate of fixed period exclusion over all three years in comparison to LA3 with LA1 breaking the regional average in 2012 – 13. Overall, this is a generally healthy picture when comparing to regional and national averages.

The following table presents data relating to permanent exclusions.

Figure 4.2 – Permanent Exclusions

	2010 – 11		2011 – 12		2012 – 13	
	State-funded secondary		State-funded secondary		State-funded secondary	
	Number of permanent exclusions	Percentage of the school population	Number of permanent exclusions	Percentage of the school population	Number of permanent exclusions	Percentage of the school population
<b>ENGLAND</b>	<b>4,370</b>	<b>0.13</b>	<b>4,390</b>	<b>0.14</b>	<b>3,900</b>	<b>0.12</b>
<b>Region</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>0.12</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>0.13</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>0.08</b>
LA3	31	0.21	34	0.23	17	0.12
LA2	69	0.32	66	0.31	46	0.21
LA1	15	0.12	10	0.08	15	0.12

The regional average is consistently lower than the national figure. LA1 is the only authority under consideration to better the national average in all years, also beating the regional average in two years. LA3 seems to have bought permanent exclusions in line with national figures but data for 2013 – 14 is needed to see whether the improvement is maintained. LA2 has consistently higher rate of permanent exclusions than regional and national figures. The reduction between the figures for 2011 – 12 and 2012 – 13 will need to be the beginning of a continuing trend for LA2's figures to come in line regionally and nationally.

#### 4.4 The field work

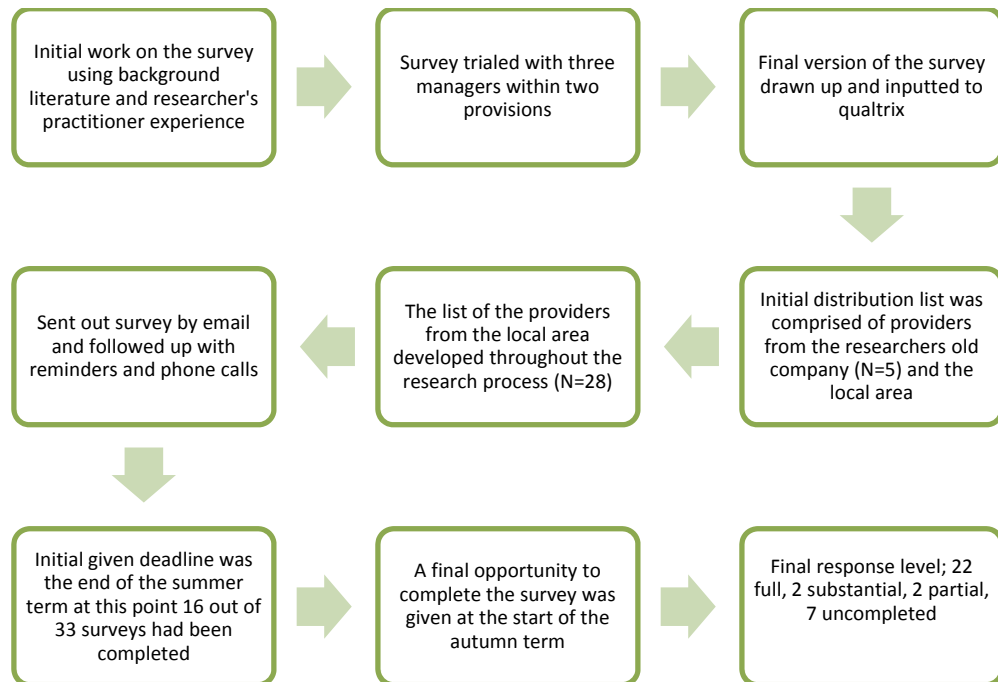
There were three stages to the research: a survey with providers of alternative education, interviews with young adults who had experienced alternative provision, and additional interviews with key stakeholders.

##### 4.4.1 Stage one – the survey

The aim of the survey was to explore the first research question, the nature of alternative provision schooling, considering similarities and differences of practice across a range of providers.

The following diagram is a simplification of the process undertaken in the first stage of the field work.

Figure 4.3 – Stage one research process



#### 4.4.1.1 Developing the survey

To begin developing the survey the categories discussed in the previous chapter were used, namely; freedom, deep relationships, individualisation, working therapeutically, respect / being treated like adults, rights and responsibilities. These were considered through physical, emotional, educational, social, economic and political dimensions. Indicators were developed using the process described by de Vaus (1990). The researcher's practice knowledge was also deployed to help capture a well-rounded picture of practice at each provision. Notions of the inevitable and pure functions of schooling (see previous chapter) were also considered to develop further questions.

From these indicators, initial questions and considerations, a survey was developed which covered four areas; questions about the manager themselves, questions about the provision and its practice, questions about attitudes held within the provision, questions about challenging situations which may arise in the field of work.

At this point further piloting was undertaken which reduced repetitive sections, gave an idea of the completion time (around 30 minutes) and led to a reframing of some of the attitude questions. Instead of solely requesting individual opinions, some questions were changed to ask about staff consensus.

It is common to pilot questionnaires in the field in which they are to be used to gain an idea of whether the document is easy to use and understand and whether the line of questioning is appropriate (Gilbert, 2001 and Bernstein et al., 2013). In addition to allowing this focus on the survey as a whole, cognitive interviewing enables the researcher to delve into the respondents' understanding of individual questions and sections. Practicing managers are the experts in this field, so although the researcher developed the survey from knowledge and understanding of alternative provision practice it was important to check that this experience was not unique or missing what other heads of provision would want to say about their practice and the attitudes held within their organisation.

Cognitive interviewing is based upon the four stages an individual goes through when answering any question and seeks to minimise inaccuracies and error in this process. The four stages are: comprehension of the question – does the respondent understand the question in the same way as the researcher; recall of the relevant information to be able to answer the question – how challenging is this for the respondent and are they estimating or counting events; deciding how to answer the question – is there any impact of how the respondent would like

to be perceived or what the research is perceived to be about; and the final response given – does the internal response of the participant map onto the response options given. The cognitive interviews drew on both thinking aloud and verbal probing techniques, which is common in this area of practice (Willis, 1999) and can be considered the most effective way to undertake this kind of interview. The approach taken allowed the researcher to understand if there were any questions where the meaning was not easily perceived; discuss with three practitioners the terms used and topics addressed in specific questions where this was deemed helpful to the research process; gain an understanding of whether current practitioners feel the researcher's understanding of alternative provision was comprehensive; and, allow these current practitioners to feed in any areas or topics they felt should have been addressed. This information was then considered in the final stages of the development of the survey before sending it out to alternative education provision heads.

#### ***4.4.1.2 In the field pretesting / cognitive interviewing***

The experience of in the field pretesting was encouraging, enlightening and also a little stressful. It was only stressful due to difficulties with the recording device and in the end it was possible to make a good record of all the responses to the survey questions. Lessons were learned with regards to storage on recording devices and scheduling interviews! More helpfully, testing the survey was encouraging and enlightening. Encouraging because the survey seemed to cover the practice and attitudes held within alternative provision and enlightening because a few interesting and potentially useful strands started to emerge from the data collected in this process.

In providing a high quality picture of practice in alternative provision the interviews affirmed the importance of choice, input, flexibility and relationships. This affirmation reflects the overall grounded theory approach taken in developing this research and the findings of this thesis. Choice was not always possible depending upon circumstances but one head discussed an 'open

dialogue' as a way of negotiating between the elements of compulsion and the areas where choice was possible. This open dialogue and the ability to input into what was learnt was affirmed again and again, with another head discussing the ability to input into and shape what was to be learnt as the 'way in' - the opportunity to secure the engagement of the students. Input was also affirmed in other areas of school life, regarding visits, decoration of the building and a school council was mentioned, even when it had been experienced unsuccessfully before, the head was still keen on building up student engagement in this way. Morning / weekly meetings were also mentioned in both centres as an opportunity to engage with students and for students to engage in the communal life of the school. Flexibility was recognised as important, with one head saying he thought it was 'number one' and discussing the need for fluidity when teaching so as to be able to educate more effectively. Relationships were recognised as important with the need to develop a safe environment where students feel safe to be themselves and able to take educational risks. Staff were recognised as important in the development of trusting relationships with students so as to enable students to feel this safety. One head referred to the commitment of staff to students, a commitment which meant they would give their time even at the end of a long day when the student in question had been swearing at them all day:

"if they suddenly break down at the end of the day and you find out why [they have been swearing at you]... amazing how much time all of them will give".

The topics not covered in the survey but raised by the interviewees led to a number of additional questions being included in the survey. As outlined above, one head was responsible for the local pupil referral unit. The way that this head discussed practice focused equally upon professionalism and ethos. The focus on professionalism was largely unrepeated in the other interviews, however one



of the other heads interviewed had come from a mainstream background and this affected how she viewed situations and the nature of alternative provision. Interestingly, the other alternative provision head mentioned his previous experience in the music business, in being around pubs and clubs as something that he drew on in his practice, discussing sensing and gauging moods, understanding more of youth culture and not being a 'teacher teacher'. For these reasons a question was added at the beginning of the survey regarding previous experience relevant to the current role of the respondent. The survey questions about authoritarian approaches and attitudes raised interesting discussion about the students need for boundaries and for someone to be in charge. This was thus included in the final version of the survey as an attitude question. Finally, one head raised the tension between what was on offer for students and their level of engagement with this, discussing that what is down on paper can look very good but the reality on the ground can be somewhat different. After discussion in supervision, it was thought best to include a question about staff consensus relating to whether students needed to engage in the taught lessons or whether just being in the provision could be considered a good outcome for students.

Other questions added at this stage included one relating to exclusion from alternative provision or being moved on to another provision. A tick-box question about what qualifications are available at the provision, a question about whether referrers provide relevant information (risk assessments, etc), a question about intervention in fights was added to the section which covered restraint and calling the police. Finally a question was added about managing and dealing with a staff team at the end of the day and the challenges and difficulties which related to this.

#### ***4.4.1.3 Sending out the survey and follow up***

The sample for the survey was identified via two sources. The first group were

managers of the five other provisions run by the company the researcher used to work for. Gaining contact details for these was a fairly simple process and only needed the agreement of the company directors.

The process for contacting the second group was more complicated. These were the providers based in or serving pupils from the county where the research was taking place. Initially a professional contact provided a list of 18 providers.

Another professional contact who was aware of the research provided contact details for three additional providers. Three further settings were identified through local knowledge and word of mouth. Two of these were part of a PRU which had recently become an academy, removing the need for ethical approval from this local authority. The researcher was made aware of this change when contacting the individual in charge of ethics at LA3, this individual was also able to provide the contact details for an another provider. This brought the total number of providers on the researchers list of contacts to 25. Further contacts were obtained through attending meetings for alternative providers in Local Authority 1 and an initial meeting with the head of a new AP free school. This process demonstrates the highly fragmented nature of the AP sector, and the challenges associated with research in this area if the different elements are to be fully represented.

The total sample size for local providers was 28 (including two providers who were on the cusp of practice). The online survey was distributed in June 2013. After the initial email out each provider was contacted by phone to check they had received the email and were aware of how to complete the survey. After this further email reminders were sent up until the end of the summer term. At this point 16 out of the 33 potential participants had responded, of the other 18 a few had provided partial responses and some had not responded at all. One individual had asked to be contacted again in September. At the beginning of September the survey was once again distributed and followed up by phone

wherever possible (in a number of cases it was not possible to get through to the potential respondent). The process was completed by sending a final email opportunity to be involved explaining that the survey would be ending at the end of the next week, but with the offer of email contact with the researcher if respondents could not meet the deadline.

#### ***4.4.1.4 Overall response rate***

When the survey was closed the responses were as follows. Of the five providers from the researcher's previous company, four responded in full and one completed over half of the survey. Of the 28 local providers, 18 responded in full, one completed over half of the survey, and two completed just the first few questions. Of the remainder who did not respond one could not be contacted in any form, another had ceased this part of their organisation, two got in touch to say they were just too busy to be able to be involved and the other three didn't opt out or complete the survey and can only be assumed to have been too busy to be able to be involved (all three had spoken with the researcher over the phone and had shown an interest in being involved and completing the survey).

#### ***4.4.1.5 Reflective note on the stage one research process***

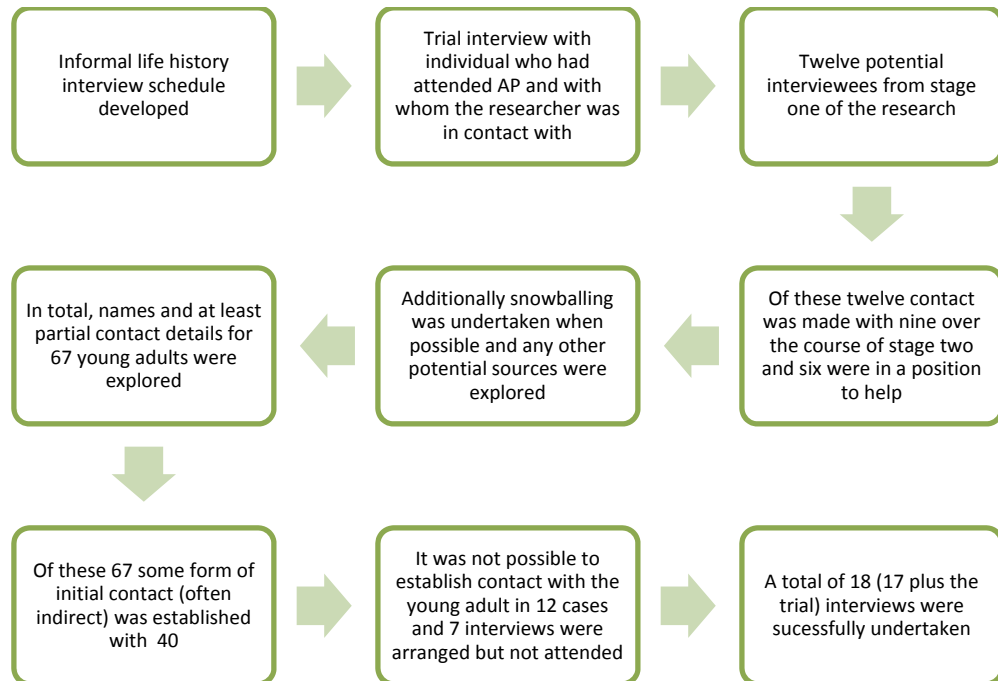
Overall the learning from this process relates to the use of a survey for considering attitudes and underlying reasons for practice. The piloting was invaluable to the development process. An improvement for any future research with similar aims to this project would be to use a more participative method to develop the survey. Taking what would essentially be a more grounded theory approach to this topic could involve undertaking a number of interviews with heads of provision before developing the survey; this could be followed by field testing before finally contacting the whole sample of participants. Developing the survey in this way would allow greater opportunity for it to be shaped by other views and understandings of practice and life in the field under consideration.

#### ***4.4.2 Stage two – Interviews with young adults***

The following diagram represents the process undertaken in the second stage of

the field work.

Figure 4.4 – Stage two research process



#### **4.4.2.1 Initial development of the research tools to be used**

The tool to be used for this stage of the research was an informal interview structure. This was initially developed alongside the researcher's application to the ethics committee. The interviews with young adults were intended to be life history interviews pivoting around the young adult's time in alternative provision so as to gain an idea of how alternative provision had impacted their life since attending. As such, the informal interview structure initially took the form of wide ranging questions to cover the different points in the young adult's life history including a number of prompts to address the area from different angles to help with responses if the interviewee was struggling.

Before trialling the informal interview structure, in supervision it was suggested that a number of slightly more abstract, reflective questions towards the end would delve beneath the individual's story and seek their input and insight into

the nature of alternative provision more generally and what they considered to be positive and negative about their experience of practice, processes and even the very existence of alternative provision. In light of this a number of questions were added concerning advice the young adults would give to prospective students, alternative provision heads and mainstream heads and about whether alternative provision should be considered a good thing or whether mainstream schools should change so as to be able to cater for all pupils.

#### ***4.4.2.2 Field trial***

As before with the survey, it was once again possible to test the informal interview structure 'in the field'. This was due to the researcher's previous role. An interview with an ex-student was easily arranged and the only anomaly was that the interviewee's sister also attended! This was easily managed and was not noticeably detrimental to the interview process – and in addition this situation alerted the researcher to the possibility of unexpected circumstances and how to navigate these positively.

Initial reflections at this stage were that the questions seemed to be appropriate and drew out relevant and helpful information. It seemed to be the case that after an initial discussion of what was currently going on in the young adult's life the interview would flow fairly easily by asking the interviewee to talk through their educational experience leading up to attending alternative provision, their time at alternative provision and what had happened since then. During this the researcher took notes on anything that needed clarification, and these items were then discussed before covering any areas missed by the interviewee's recollection of the journey through alternative provision. Finally, the more reflective questions were explored with the interviewee. Overall the structure worked well and did not require substantial amendment.

#### ***4.4.2.3 Identifying and meeting the young adult sample***

This process involved first gaining access to contact details for young adults before contacting, arranging and undertaking interviews. Gaining access to

contact details proved easy in some cases but rather protracted and difficult in others. Causes of delays included concerns on the part of one provider who was anxious about data protection and wanted to make contact with an advisor in the information commissioner's office, and a failed attempt – on account of a change in IT systems – to obtain names from the local authority team which places pupils in alternative provision.

To begin this process, providers who had responded to say they were open to further contact were filtered to identify those who had been practicing for five or more years. This gave 12 possible leads to contacts regarding ex pupils. Initially four providers were contacted (two via email) with one responding positively and posting off five letters to potential participants. Next, one of the providers who had requested contact via email (an email had been sent in previous weeks) was now contacted by phone. A meeting was set up to put together a mail-out to 5 previous students. This head of provision suggested that in one of the five cases the young adult had autism and may not want to attend an interview as he would likely find it difficult. In this case it was considered helpful to have an initial discussion with the young man's mother.

As the second stage of research meant contacting young adults it was considered that using the relationships that the researcher had with the PRU and the company he used to work for would be of use, so long as any contacts from the researcher's previous company preceded his time there. The pupil referral unit head was contacted and a meeting arranged to put together a mail-out. At this meeting a small change was made to the letter to be sent out to clarify the opt-out process as the staff member assigned to this task had similar data protection concerns to the very first provider contacted. It was useful at this stage to be able to advise that the information commissioner's office had been contacted and had advised that the decision could be made by those running the provision. The researcher's old place of work delegated the responsibility for this task to an

employee who was known to the target group. This contact provided addresses and contact details for pupils who had attended the provision in 2006. Due to the extended period since these pupils had attended this provision all 16 possible contacts were made – one was left out as the researcher had met this student previously in a youth work setting.

As the contacts became available (after the expiration of the opt out period) it became clear that the follow up contact rate would be such that it would be necessary to approach additional providers regarding previous attendees. Five additional providers were approached at this stage. This generated two positive responses. A local youth work organisation also proved a fruitful avenue to pursue. Attempts to gain further contacts were made through the SEN team, Virtual school for looked after children, the sixteen plus team at LA1, and through the youth offending service for the county. All were unsuccessful. Personal contacts were, generally, invaluable and towards the end of the field work the researcher's relationship with the PRU in LA1 came into its own facilitating seven further contacts.

Actually meeting young adults for interviews proved similarly complex. In total, names and at least partial contact details for 67 young adults were explored. Of these 67 some form of initial contact, which was often indirect, was established with 40. It was not possible to establish contact with the young adult in twelve cases. Four were busy or not interested in taking part, and seven interviews were arranged but not attended. A total of 18 (17 plus the trial) interviews were successfully undertaken. After a false start, this process started on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2013 and ended on the 8<sup>th</sup> July 2014. It therefore took a total of seven months to undertake seventeen interviews.

#### **4.4.3 The interviewees**

A total of eighteen young adults were participants in this research project. The pilot interviewee was someone the researcher had taught and was still able to

contact. Of the other seventeen participants; three came via the provider which was the researcher's old employer; six came from contacts at the pupil referral unit; three came from a local youth provision; one came through snowballing/word of mouth; and four came from two other providers who had participated in the first stage of the research – three from one and one from the other.

The following sections will consider the characteristics and previous experiences of participants and their situations when interviewed.

#### ***4.4.3.1 Previous experiences***

As one would expect, the experiences of those interviewed were many and varied. It is important to note that the characteristics discussed below are things picked up or covered in the interview process and as such it is possible that the reality is slightly different. It is however thought that the experiences the young adults perceive as relevant will have been mentioned and that the records collected in the research process are likely to be accurate.



Figure 4.5 – The previous experiences of young adults interviewed

Name	In care	SEN	P.Ex.	Bullied	CAMHS	Carer	Assessed Pupil Experience Type
Emily	Yes		Yes				Stress
Josh				Yes	Yes		Bullied
Carl				Yes			Bullied (Stress, anger)
Dean	Had SW, lived with friends family	Yes					Motivation / Stress
Kim		Yes		Yes			Needs / Bullied
Lucy	Attended specialist boarding college	Yes	Yes				Motivation / Needs
Jenny				Yes	Yes		Bullied
Sam			Yes				Motivation (Needs, concentration)
John		Yes	Yes			Yes – dad	Stress / Needs (Motivation)
Nadia	Yes		Yes	Yes			Stress
Jeremy	Left home ~17	Yes	Yes				Needs / Stress / Motivation
Ed	Yes	Yes		Yes			Stress / Needs (Bullying)
Ollie				Yes			Bullying / Stress
James	Yes			Yes			Stress / Motivation / Bullying
Charlotte							Other, system fault
Paul			Yes	Some			Motivation / Stress
Phil	Lived with Nan	Yes	Yes				Motivation / Needs
Liz				Yes		Yes – mum	Bullied (anxiety)

Of the eighteen young adults interviewed four had experienced being taken into care, this broadly aligns to the figure of nearly one in five discussed Chapter 2. However, beyond this, one mentioned that they were nearly taken into care, another had had a social worker and lived at a friend's house for a time, one had attended a residential special school during the week, and another walked out of home at the age of seventeen and moved into a hostel. This gives a good gauge

of the level of instability which can be present in the lives of the young people who attend alternative provision schools. In terms of other contacts with services, two young adults had received support from CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) and another two had undertaken caring responsibilities when growing up. It could perhaps be argued that the lack of mental health provision for young people is evident, but given the sample size it is not possible to infer further.

Similar to the figure of 50% either excluded or at risk of exclusion quoted in the introduction, eight of the eighteen interviewees had been permanently excluded from mainstream school. The fact that over half of those interviewed had not experienced permanent exclusion once more reinforces the need to question the notion of PRUs and alternative provision being solely for pupils presenting challenging behaviour.

Seven out of the eighteen young adults had had statements of SEN which is much higher than the 13% from previous studies quoted in the introduction. Ten young adults had experienced bullying. This is an issue that is broadly missing from discussions of alternative provision although McCluskey (2008) mentions this in relation to self-exclusion from school.

#### ***4.4.3.2 Current situation***

Given the nature of this study and the concern to understand how alternative provision schooling impacts on the lives of those who attend, it is important to consider the current situations of the young adults who took part in the research. Figure 4.6 below summarises these circumstances in terms of relationships, education, training and work and whether or not the young person was a parent.

Figure 4.6 – Current life circumstance of young adults on interview

Name	In work	In education / training	In a relationship	Is a parent / carer	Volunteering
Emily	Yes		Yes	Yes	
Josh	Yes	Yes – evening classes	Yes	Yes	
Carl	Yes				
Dean	Yes		Yes		
Kim				Yes	
Lucy	Yes	Yes – evening classes			
Jenny	Yes		Yes		
Sam	Yes		Yes	Yes	
John	Yes				
Nadia		Yes – Uni	Yes	Yes	
Jeremy	Yes		Yes		
Ed			Yes		Yes
Ollie	Previously		Yes		Yes
James	Previously	Yes – 16+ provider			
Charlotte		Yes – College			
Paul	Previously				
Phil	Previously				
Liz		Yes – Uni			

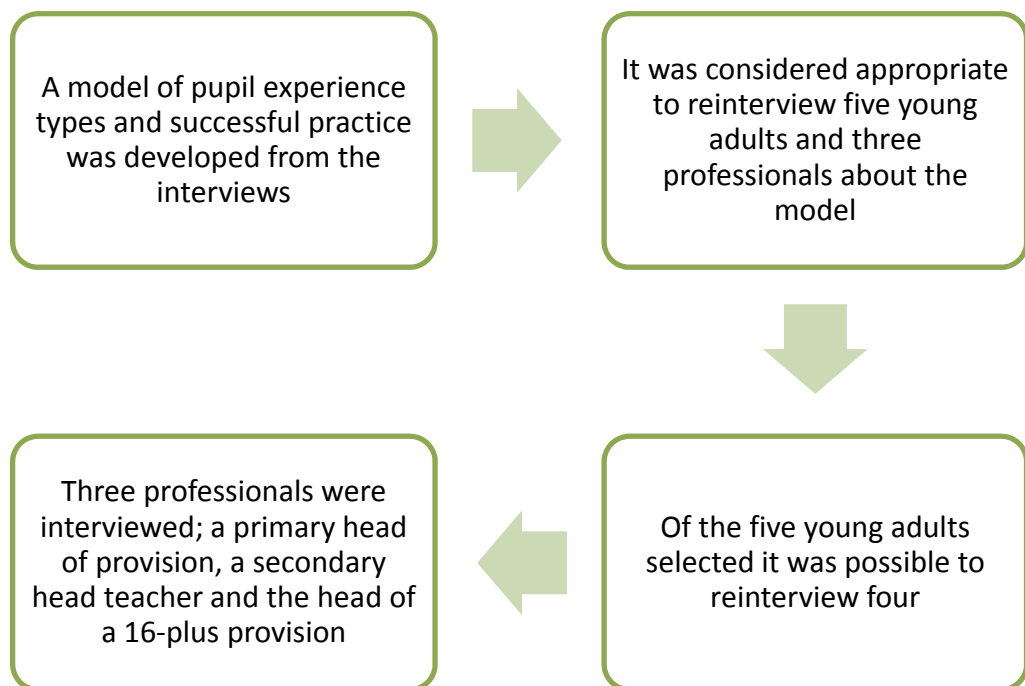
Of the eighteen, nine were in work and four had worked previously but were no longer in work. Six were in education or training; two in evening classes; two at university; one in college; and one in a 16-plus provision. Nine of the young adults were in a relationship and five were parents (in one case this was the partner's child). Two young adults were currently volunteering but many mentioned that this had been a part of their story, especially in connection to

working on their CV or building up connections for work. Thirteen of the eighteen were therefore in work, training or education. This leaves five who would be labelled as NEET. Of these, one was a parent, had recently got her child settled in school and was beginning to think again about herself and work opportunities. Two were volunteering, and two had worked previously, one of these took part in the stage three re-interview and by that time had got a job. This level of precarity is resonant with literature covered in the previous chapter on the current shape of the labour market for young adults.

#### **4.4.4 Stage three – further (re)interviews with key informants**

As mentioned above, a third stage emerged from the research process. This was largely due to the development of ideas about types of experience of pupils who tended to be excluded from mainstream schooling and what success in alternative provision looked like for them. This is discussed in detail in the findings below. For now, the development of this third stage of field work and the process by which it was undertaken will be discussed. As before, the following simple model shows the stages in this part of the field work.

Figure 4.7 – Stage three research process



Due to the simplicity of the model which emerged from the interviews with young adults it was possible to capture initial ideas about types of experience of pupils who ended up in alternative provision and what success looked like for them on a single side of A4. Having developed this, and having begun to talk about some of these ideas with the young people who were being interviewed towards the end of stage two of the field work it was considered appropriate to undertake a third stage of research. This involved going back to five young adults who had already been interviewed to talk about the model which had been developed, in part, from what they had said. It was decided that interviewing one pupil of each experience type (as discerned by the researcher) discussed in the model and one more complex case would be a sensible way in which to undertake this process. As noted in the diagram above, it was only possible to re-interview four of the five young adults selected however this was not thought to be detrimental to the process.

In addition to re-interviewing young adults it was decided that it would also be helpful to gather the views of a number of 'key informants'. This involved talking to the head of a primary provision for pupils out of mainstream schooling, the head of a mainstream secondary school and the manager of a course/provision for young adults aged over sixteen. In all three cases an informal interview about their practice and general views and experience of exclusion and alternative provision was undertaken before the introduction and discussion of the types of experience model.

This third stage of the field work was found to be highly useful to the overall research project as an opportunity to think about the ideas which were emerging from the process and to have them critiqued by those who had experienced alternative provision schooling and who worked around this environment.

#### ***4.4.4.1 A note on stage three analysis***

There were not many difficulties in this process. The only challenge was the

analysis of this data. This was because the stage three data was connected to an early types of experience model which was developed by the stage two data when analysing in detail. As such, when analysing the stage three data this had to be completed with the early model in mind rather than the one that had developed from the analysis up to this stage. This was however a simple enough task and is not considered to have been detrimental in any way to the overall research project. The learning to take away from this situation is that if building in a level of back and forth with participants from the beginning of the project then it may help to keep the process by which the analysis will occur more clearly in mind when planning. This would enable sequential analysis of any findings or emerging models alongside the data which is specifically relevant to them.

#### **4.5 Analysis**

In beginning to discuss analysis it is important first to touch on the adequacy of the sample under consideration. As has been outlined above, all alternative providers in the area and from the researcher's previous employer were contacted to take part in the research. This sample provides sufficient data to explore the values and practice across different forms of alternative provision – the first question to be addressed by this project.

The second question revolved around the effect of alternative provision on those who attend. It is clear from the data covered in the introduction that outcomes (e.g. qualifications, whether NEET) for excludees and those who attend alternative provision are lower than their peers. It was however the researcher's contention that valuable learning did take place in alternative provision schools. As such, it was necessary to collect the accounts and reflections of those who had experienced this kind of schooling, allowing for a rich, deep picture of the effect of alternative provision to be built up. As set out above, the approach taken was to talk to young adults who had previously attended alternative provision. This sample was therefore constrained by the hard to reach and hidden nature of this population. The approach taken to reaching this sample

was essentially one of diligent convenience, of exploring any and all routes available to the researcher to establish contact with young adults who had attended alternative provision schooling. That the young adults included in the sample were contactable and willing to be interviewed suggests that their experiences may well have been more positive than average and that they were currently settled. It is important to recognise that there will be other, likely divergent, views on the nature and impact of alternative provision. Despite this, it is clear that the young adults involved in this research have much to say about the effect of alternative provision and the impact that it can have. And as will be articulated in the findings, for many of these young adults their time in alternative provision proved to be a turning point into a future no longer aligned to the difficulties they had faced in mainstream schooling.

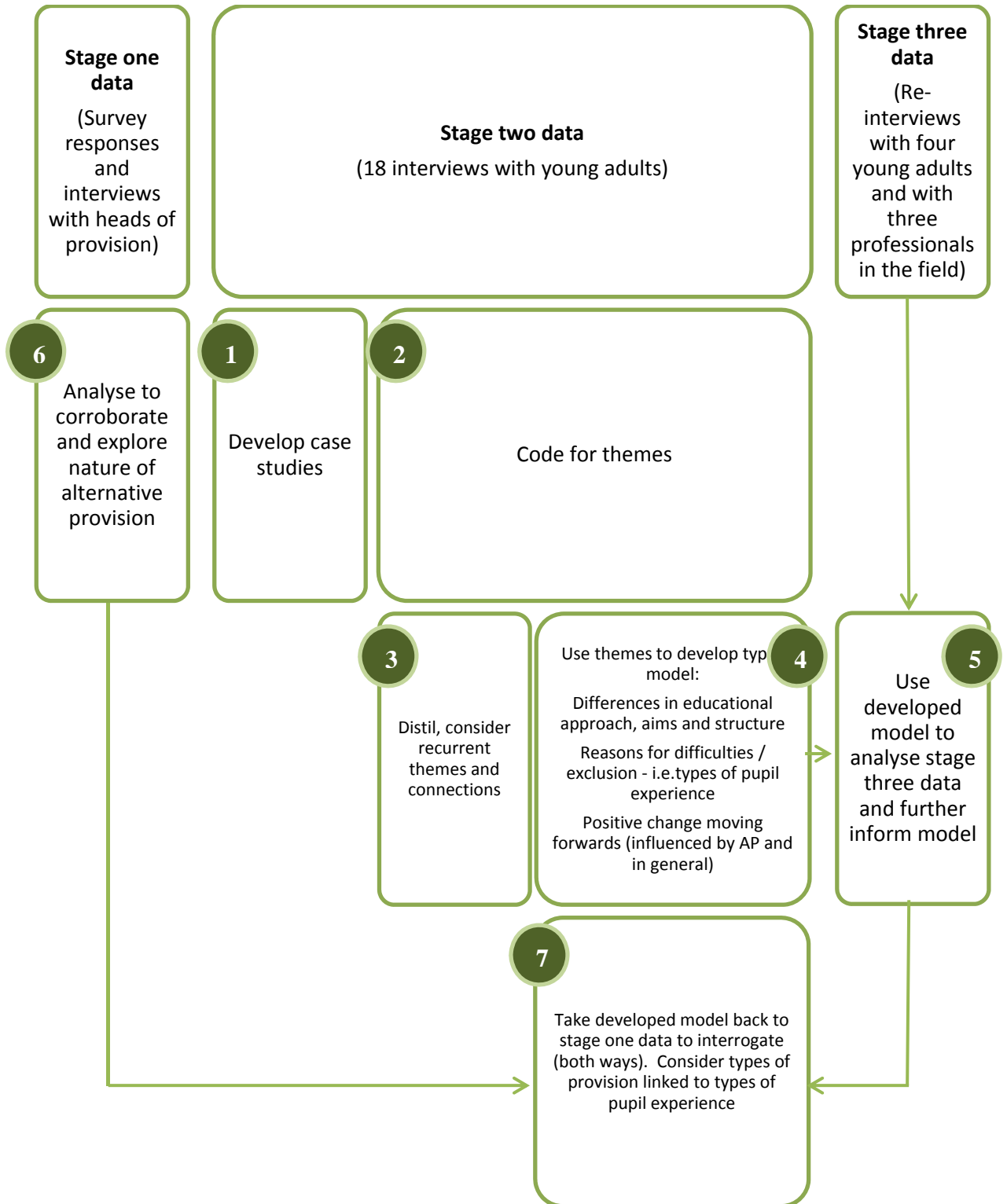
It has already been noted above in relation to stage three of the field work that the findings of this research project have emerged from the research process itself. This very much reflects a grounded theory approach and will be built upon in the discussion of the analysis below. One of the concepts discussed in grounded theory is that of 'saturation', of reaching the stage where the researcher recognises every topic, theme and perspective raised in an interview from some previous participant's account. Upon embarking on the field work the researcher was concerned that between fifteen and twenty interviews would not be enough to reach this point. However the very development of the types of experience model mentioned above during the field work is a sign of having reached 'saturation'; in being able to recognise the specific types of experience had by young adults who have attended alternative provision.

The following sections will discuss the way in which data was analysed and how this process was grounded so that findings were interrogated by the data from which they had emerged. As with the three stages of field work, a diagram will first give an overview of the analysis process, this will be followed by an in depth



discussion of the analysis.

Figure 4.8 – Analysis process



#### **4.5.1 Rationale**

The research process up to this point was reflexive and as such, the development of the idea of a 'types of experience' model, although in part grounded in the researcher's previous experience, has very much been developed as part of the research process. The development of this model and its use in structuring the analysis process is therefore in line with a grounded theory approach and can be considered a strength of the overall research project.

The diagram above outlines a seven stage analysis process beginning with the stage two data before moving onto the data collected at stage three and finally back to the data collected during stage one. It was decided to begin with the stage two data as this comprises the majority of the information gathered and as such was likely to be where the strongest theoretical ideas would be developed before being refined and complimented by the analysis of the stage three and then stage one data. Brief detail will now be given of what the analysis involved at each of the seven stages.

1. Develop case studies – this involved reading through the transcript for each interviewee and putting together a timeline of events related to their experience of schooling, alternative provision and beyond and anything else mentioned which was pertinent. Quotes from the young adult relating to their experiences were positioned alongside this timeline of events.
2. Code for themes – each interview transcript was uploaded into Nvivo and anything each young adult had said which could be considered significant in any way was coded into themes.
3. Distil, consider recurrent themes and connections – the themes generated from the initial coding were considered one at a time for both internal consistency and coherence across all the themes. Particularly dominant or important themes were identified at this point and any connections between the themes considered.

4. Use themes to develop types of experience model – relevant themes were cross referenced and used to critique and enhance the model developed during the fieldwork. This involved the consideration of:
  - a. Differences in educational approach, aims and structure – what young adults say about mainstream schooling and alternative provision were considered alongside any other relevant themes
  - b. Reasons for difficulties / exclusion, i.e. types of pupil experience – themes relating to reasons for exclusion or the use of alternative provision were considered alongside any themes relating to the reasons for difficulties the young adult experienced during their time in the education system
  - c. Positive change moving forwards (influenced by AP and in general) – themes relating to changes experienced because of alternative provision were considered along with any other reasons for change after schooling (post-16)
5. Use developed model to analyse stage three data and further inform model – it was anticipated the initial types of experience model would develop and be refined by close scrutiny and exposure to the empirical data collected in the field work. The developed model was then taken back to the stage three data (four re-interviews with young adults and three with relevant professionals). This data was coded in Nvivo specifically in relation to the types of experience model. The themes coded were used to further scrutinise and enhance the model.
6. Analyse to corroborate and explore nature of alternative provision – at this stage the data collected in stage one of the fieldwork was considered. The main aim of this was to consider the question, ‘What is the nature of alternative provision?’, however dominant and important themes which emerged from the stage two young adult interview data in stage three of the analysis process were also used to develop the analysis of the stage one survey data.

7. Take developed model back to stage one data to interrogate (both ways).

Consider types of provision linked to types of pupil experience – at this final stage the model was subject to one more stage of scrutiny, this involved checking it against the data collected in stage one of the field work and in particular with a focus on whether there was any basis for a discussion of types of provision linked to the types of pupil experience which had been developed up to that point.

The process outlined is both systematic and reflexive, the characteristics which are broadly necessary for a grounded theory approach to be successful (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003). It is clearly an iterative process with codes and findings being developed from data collected with the generation of theoretical insight in mind (Hutchison et al., 2010). It is also considered that, despite the small sample size, saturation point was reached in this research project.

#### **4.5.2 Undertaking the analysis**

The analysis process progressed as above, however it is helpful to fill in the details of what was generated at each stage. In stage two of the analysis a total of 114 themes were generated from the 18 interview transcripts, these were initially coded all at one level before being refined and grouped by similarities (stage three of the analysis process) and as sub themes to either existing or newly developed categorisation themes. There were a total of 135 nodes after rationalising. However some of there were categorisation themes with nothing coded to them but providing structure to the overall model.

During the process of refining and checking for consistency within and between themes a document was compiled which gave the name of each theme and a brief description of what it contained and any dominant sub-themes referenced within it. This document was then used in stage four of the analysis as a way of considering the themes relevant to the questions addressed there. It was also possible when rationalising and developing the description of each theme to consider which of the themes were particularly dominant in accounts of the

experience of alternative provision and which themes would therefore be worth exploring in greater detail.

Stage four of the analysis used the descriptions of themes developed in stage three and also considered the references coded at relevant nodes in Nvivo. This process was rather more complex than what is outlined above and involved moving between sources of information and cross referencing and checking findings a number of times. As such the findings at this stage truly were emerging from the data and being developed by going back to / getting deep into the data – very much a grounded theory approach to analysis – aided by the structure of the process outlined above and necessary for grounded theory (Hutchison et al., 2010).

Stage four of the analysis comprised three steps, the first of these contrasted mainstream schooling and alternative provision considering educational approach, aims and structure. To begin this process the relevant themes from the theme descriptions document were copied into a document containing all the theme descriptions which were pertinent to parts one, two and three of stage four of the analysis process. Upon examination of these themes it was possible to group them into two main categories for mainstream schooling and three for alternative provision. For mainstream schooling these were 'organisational constraints' and 'fundamentals of practice and aims', for alternative provision they were 'personalisation', 'relationships' and 'learning and curriculum'.

These will of course be discussed in detail elsewhere in this thesis however the line of argument that has developed from reflecting upon the young adults accounts of their experiences is that the dominant focus of mainstream schooling is exams / qualifications and the way in which it works towards this is in its nature highly systematic. All pupils must fit into the pre-specified

timetabling and options so as not to be rejected from the system. Now, if mainstream schooling works systemically to produce qualifications, it seems we can consider alternative provision to work *relationally* to prepare students for their next step.

Steps two and three of stage four of the analysis initially considered the theme descriptions just as the first step had done and quickly merged into a single process which analysed the causes and effects of alternative provision across the interviewees. The theme descriptions influenced the researcher's thinking and awareness as the analysis of steps two and three developed (described below) and in particular led to the development of a number of 'influences' or effects of alternative provision. There were initially four of these 'influences'; calming, motivation, options and sociability however it was important to go back to Nvivo and code these directly from the data (using the already existing 'changes because of alternative provision' node) which led to the initial four influences to develop into the following five:

- calming influence
- confidence influence
- motivational influence
- opening options influence (educational or awareness)
- sociability influence

Consideration of the theme descriptions also led to the notion of 'triggers' of alternative provision, these could be a person or a situation, and were incorporated into tables developed in the analysis as set out below.

The next task in analysing the causes and effects of alternative provision was to compile a table to compare interviewees. This table addressed three questions: why the interviewee was not in mainstream school; what alternative provision

was used and how it was organised; and any outcomes of the alternative provision. This table was populated using the timelines which were developed for each interviewee during stage one of the analysis (see Appendix 1). At this stage it became clear that there were eight underlying causes for the use of alternative provision. These were:

- Mental Health
- Bullying
- Care
- Stress
- SEN
- Motivation / engagement
- Difficulties with authority
- Systemic fault

Despite the developing clarity it was evident that there was cross-over between some of the categories, in particular:

- Bullying and mental health
- Stress and care
- Motivation / engagement and difficulties with authority

These initial insights were used to develop the table to include nine separate sections for each young adult interviewed. The nine sections covered four areas with the original entries from the table being coupled with a simplified section cross-comparing common themes between young adults. One additional area was added to the three original questions in the table and one of the questions necessitated two sub sections to cover the common themes. The format of the table is included below:

Figure 4.9 – Table format used in analysis

Who	Why not in mainstream		What alternative provision and how used	Outcomes of alternative provision	Positive change post provision (reasons)
	Why AP used	Underlying causes	Who (/what) triggered use of AP	Effects of alternative provision	Drivers of change post alternative provision

As outlined above the idea of triggers was developed from the theme descriptions. Similarly ‘Drivers of change post alternative provision’ emerged from consideration of the theme descriptors but was enhanced and developed using references directly from relevant themes in Nvivo. This led to the conceptualisation of seven ‘drivers of change’:

- Growing up
- Having to look after self
- Parenthood
- Taking responsibility in learning
- Taking responsibility in work
- Taking responsibility at home
- Relationship (partner)

In addition to the development of the table to cross compare the young adults’ experiences, individual documents, somewhat similar to the time lines, were developed which covered individual causes and effects with three sub-themes for each (see appendix 2). The causes were:



- Nature of acting out
- Reasons for acting out
- Reasons for alternative provision

The effects were:

- Changes because of alternative provision
- Negative life experience after alternative provision
- Reasons for personal change

These six themes were directly related to themes generated in Nvivo, thus each young adult's cause and effect model was initially populated with all their references coded under each theme. These were then rationalised, taking out anything that was either irrelevant to the model or duplicated and leaving quotes from the young adults interview which gave insight into what had led up to the use of alternative provision and the effect it had had for each young adult who had been interviewed. Specific phrases and words which were considered particularly relevant or were thought to convey the detail of each young adults experience were changed to bold type and enlarged so as to convey the relevant themes emerging from each account. An example of this is included below, this was included under 'Reasons for acting out':

"it was very like, mis matched, like it was one minute I was with my mum, one minute I was in care, and then ... **during the summer holidays, they put me into care**, yeah, when I was in year ten it was the first couple of weeks I was really like.. The end of year nine the beginning of year ten it was just, I was reall.. like during the summer and stuff **I got really really naughty and they just couldn't control me at all**"

Once cause and effect models were completed for all the young adults they were cross compared with each young adult's entries in the table. This ensured there was consistency across all the analytical models which were being developed. This was important because although all the information had come from the interview transcripts some had come via the timelines with the rest coming via the coding themes developed in Nvivo. Cross referencing provided an opportunity to fill in some gaps which had been left where young people had experienced bullying and therefore nothing had been coded to 'nature of acting out' and 'reasons for acting out'. It was decided that in this situation truancy / forging notes / disengagement would be referenced to 'nature of acting out' and that experiences of bullying would therefore be referenced at 'reasons for acting out'. The process of cross referencing also highlighted the need to re-consider the 'influences' (of alternative provision). It was clear from consideration of the young adults' experiences that there was some kind of important influence relating to relationships at alternative provision and the stability that a placement provided. Upon reconsideration of these themes and by using what young adults had said about their time within and experience of alternative provision, not just looking for change but the ways in which they described their experience, it became clear that relationships and stability were important and therefore appropriate to categorise into the model.

Finally a table was produced which simply contained the causes and effects, eight reasons for the use of alternative provision and the five 'influences'. This table was initially produced before the cross referencing and refining of idea discussed above and therefore initially included numerous causes and effects for each young adult. As part of the cross referencing process the detail of each young adult's story was considered and the dominant causes and effects were picked out (leading to the reconsideration of the influences described above). This led to a model where the following relationships were noticeable:

**Causes or 'reasons for alternative provision'**

Stress (at times combined with experience of care)

Bullying (at times combined with mental health)

SEN

Difficulties with authority (at times combined with motivation / engagement)

**Effects or 'influences'**


Relationships and stability

Sociability and confidence

Calming and opening options (at times sociability)

Calming and motivation

**4.6 Conclusion**

 This chapter has in part been the beginning of a discussion of what has been discovered through the research project, which is inevitable given the grounded theory approach being taken. It is now time to move into a discussion of Bourdieu's field theory which has been used to undergird the findings.

## 5 Theory

Certain theoretical questions are inherently connected to any discussion of alternative provision schooling. Given that alternative provision exists to school those who are marginalised and excluded from mainstream education, the nature of disadvantage in schooling and its effect on adult life is the first of these questions. This question has already been considered as a part of the argument set out within the literature review. The following will consider the question of structure and agency. In the context of alternative provision this becomes a question about whether it is the nature of our society and the position of any individual within it which leads to marginalisation and exclusion, or whether it is the choices of those who end up in alternative provision which have led to this position. This chapter will provide the beginning of an answer to this question and in so doing will outline the theoretical concepts which are drawn on to explore the findings of this research.

### 5.1 Structure and Agency and Bourdieu's field theory

Bourdieu's field theory provides a number of interrelated concepts which at one and the same time provide both a way in which to understand an individual young person's shaping, by and of, their environment, choices and experiences, and a framework from which the impact of alternative provision can be considered in its fullest sense. Field theory uses the three interrelated concepts of field, habitus and capital, which when considered together facilitate a coherent and cogent analysis of the relationships which make up any social situation. Bourdieu describes the relationship between field and habitus as follows:

“The relation between habitus and field operates in two ways. On one side, it is a relation of *conditioning*: the field structures the habitus, which is the product of the embodiment of the immanent necessity of a field ... On the other side, it is a relation of knowledge of *cognitive construction*. Habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world, a

world endowed with sense and value, in which it is worth investing one's energy" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p127)

The important interrelationship between the three concepts is also evident in terms of the relationship between capital and field, which Bourdieu describes in the following terms:

"a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their experience and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.)" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p97)

In summary, the field is the totality of the relations between all those who exist within the field and its structures. The habitus is the internalisation of the structure and rules of the field, yet, as well as being structured by the field the habitus is also involved in the on-going structuring, usually perpetuation but at times challenge, of the field. An individual's position can be maintained by the employment of their capital to realise profits which are at play in the field in question. Thus field theory provides a model which transcends the structure agency divide and provides an articulation of the process through which change occurs.

## **5.2 Field**

The field is the area under consideration. It can concern a specific space or organisation such as a school although the field will undoubtedly reach beyond the boundaries of the physical building and as such has similarities with the

notion of a force field (Hodkinson 2007). The forces (relationships) which act within the field mean that “what happens to any object that traverses this space cannot be explained solely by the intrinsic properties of the object in question” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p100). As such, the forces (relationships), although less obvious at face value, are as important as the things (people) which are part of the field (Hodkinson, 2007). The field follows rules and regularities which are not necessarily explicitly agreed or articulated. It follows from this that what happens is somewhat like a game with individual players; those who are engaged in the field agree to the rules of the game and its stakes by the mere fact that they play the game (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). The objectified structure is the rules, whether financial, legal or in writing, which govern and or relate to the field. The embodied structure concerns the way in which these explicit rules, and others which are unspoken, are internalised by individuals acting within the field.

### **5.3 Habitus**

On one hand habitus refers to an individual’s way of being, everything that makes up their response to their environment. On the other, in relation to a specific field, it comprises the necessary ways of being and dispositions which first enable one to exist within the field but more often focus on enabling success within the field. As such:

“When habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is like a “fish in water”: it does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world about itself for granted” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p127)

The above quote recognises the extent to which an individual’s experience is bound up in their history and perception of their environment. Bourdieu suggests that any individual is essentially trapped within the social bounds of their mind which are owed to ones upbringing and experiences. Despite this, it is still possible for change to occur through reflection and self-work. Summing up

this complex relationship well, Bourdieu speaks of habitus as:

*“an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures. It is durable but not external! Having said this, I must immediately add that there is a probability ... that experiences will confirm habitus, because most people are statistically bound to encounter circumstances that tend to agree with those that originally fashioned their habitus”* (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p133)

Alongside habitus, it is important to outline and clarify the notions of; positions, dispositions and trajectory within the field. Positions refers to the role or place an individual holds within the field; this could be the pupil, teacher or other staff member, or could involve labels such as ADHD, SEN, pupil on behavioural report, trainee teacher, etc. It has been noted that Bourdieu believes positions could at least partially be analysed regardless of their occupant’s characteristics (Ferrare and Apple, 2015). This is an important point for the model of pupil types of experience which is developed in the findings chapters. Ferrare and Apple reiterate the way in which one’s habitus is structured by available positions specifically in relation to the schooling context:

*“students actively read the curricular positions of their schools and formulate cultural models about who belongs in advanced courses and the postsecondary worlds they make possible. The problem here is not a lack of cultural capital or ‘hysteresis’ of the habitus, but rather a deficit in the very structure of curricular positions”* (Ferrare and Apple, 2015, p54).

The reality of responses being shaped by structure leads to dispositions. Dispositions concern the individual’s internalised responses in relation to their position within the field. Referring to the work of Lewin and giving a more

generalised account of responses connected to needs, Ferrare and Apple (2015) give the example of someone who is thirsty. This person's response to water would be strongly positive whilst for a salty cracker would be strongly negative. They note that this shows behaviour to be subjectively predicated upon perceptions of need. However, saying this, field theory – in particular in relation to dispositions – is not overly deterministic. Elsewhere Bourdieu has insisted that:

“Human action is not an instantaneous reaction to immediate stimuli, and the slightest “reaction” of an individual to another is pregnant with the whole history of these persons and of their relationship” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p124).

This recognition of a complex reality in the moment under consideration which is coupled with the whole history of all involved leads to the notion of a trajectory within the field. The notion of a trajectory within / through a field reinforces the fact that any individual is not in a stationary position within the field but has a past, a future and a trajectory through the field. Bourdieu has noted that:

“the strategies of a “player” and everything that defines his “game” are a function not only of the volume and structure of his capital *at the moment under consideration* and of the game chances ... they guarantee him, but also of the *evolution over time* of the volume and structure of his capital, that is, of his social trajectory and of the dispositions (habitus) constituted in the prolonged relation to a definite distribution of objective chances” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p99).

This once more reinforces the triplicate and interconnected nature of field, habitus and capital discussed further below.



## **5.4 Capital**

Capital comes in economic, social and cultural forms. The capitals at play within a field are the exchangeable, sometimes intangible, resources which actors use to maintain and improve their position within the field, thereby perpetuating the field and social stratification more generally (Krarup and Munk, 2014). They can be traded for other forms of capital which are more connected to success within the field, so for example, money (economic capital) can be traded for private tutoring thereby bolstering an individual's cultural capital in terms of academic ability. It is highly important that capitals are understood in relation to their social context and not simply constructed as inherent in their value. Bourdieu connects capital and field in constructing individuals as social agents, as:

“bearers of capitals and, depending on their trajectory and on the position they occupy in the field by virtue of their endowment (volume and structure) in capital, they have a propensity to orient themselves actively either towards the preservation of the distribution of capital or towards the subversion of this distribution” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p109)

This propensity to either preserve or subvert the distribution of capital is helpful for understanding some of the non-conforming behaviour which occurs in schooling which can lead to pupil's marginalisation and exclusion. If one attempts to subvert the distribution of capital they can attempt to alter the relative value of, and exchange rate between certain capital at play in the field. This can be undertaken by discrediting their opponent's capital and valorising their own (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

### **5.4.1 Economic capital**

Economic capital comprises the financial resources available to an individual. The example given about of private tutoring involves drawing on economic capital to invest in other capitals – this arguably develops social capital in

addition to the cultural capital suggested above in that a relationship is formed with the tutor which is conceivably not entirely based on tutoring but can include other elements, see below.

#### **5.4.2 Social Capital**

Social capital is encompassed by the social connections available to an individual upon which they draw when striving to succeed in any situation. Building on the tutoring example above, although the tutoring might be for maths the tutor may have a friend who is able to advise on the process by which the individual receiving tutoring moves into a certain profession. They might arrange work experience or suggest courses or jobs to apply for. If work experience was undertaken, this social capital has been used to build cultural capital (and further social capital) through the opportunity to learn about the way in which the field of their chosen profession operates. As Bourdieu has said:

“Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p119).

As such, paying for private tutoring using economic capital develops the individuals ‘network’ and relationships upon which they can draw.

#### **5.4.3 Cultural Capital**

Cultural capital consists of all the dispositions an individual embodies which make for success within a field. Krarup and Munk (2014) have noted the way in which many have used cultural capital rather narrowly as an individual resource, comparable to say IQ, forgetting its relational grounding and the importance of connecting any capital into the social reality which invests it with its value. As such, cultural capital will only be of value (and therefore be recognisable as such) if it is a scarce resource by which success within the field can be measured or ones position within the field can be maintained or improved:

“Cultural capital is exactly ‘effective’ because it is valued and esteemed a legitimate measure of worth by both high achievers and the educational system. Omitting this aspect runs the risk of misinterpreting effects of single items, such as number of books in the home and extracurricular activities, as themselves being generators of educational value, whereas they are instead the means for value production in a larger educational system” (Krarup and Munk, 2014, p5).

In addition to the importance of scarcity, capital’s relevance and effect will change from field to field and over time and dependent on positioning within the field:

“The same variable (e.g. an indicator of cultural capital) is not likely to have the same effect in two different fields. Moreover, it is not even likely to have constant effects within a specific field but will depend on the position in the field ... What makes the notion of cultural capital useful is its analytical capacity to illuminate these issues from a structural perspective” (Krarup and Munk, 2014, p8)

The changing value of capital is an important part of the process of rendering clear the underlying structure of the field. Once more the importance of considering field, habitus and capital as an interconnected whole is underlined.

The intransigence of field positions over time is likely. Even if change occurs in terms of resources available to young people, their position within the field is unlikely to be effected. Taking the example of trips, a pupil from a poor household may, after going to the seaside or the woods or countryside, be in a much better position to respond to say, SATs questions which ask for a story related to this experience. This is clearly a simplification as there will be many

interrelated factors which impact on the child's attainment in exams. However as the quote above suggests, over time, if this was the sole problem, many more students would be getting higher levels in their SATs. It is conceivable that this would lead those who write the papers to change the way in which they frame questions so as to 'fully recognise' the 'span of ability' within the student group being assessed thus reinscribing the pupils original position.

### **5.5 The field of power**

It is important to acknowledge the importance of the field of power which concerns class, race and gender and the other broader power dynamics / forces at play in society. Hodkinson et al. note that:

“This is the field of macro-political decision-making, and of power broking by major multinational corporations and the media, amongst others. Put another way, FE and the colleges and sites within it are interpenetrated by issues of social class, gender and ethnicity, and issues of globalization that cut across society as a whole” (Hodkinson et al., 2007, p423).

In this thesis it is possible to insert alternative provision and the providers in place of 'FE and the colleges'. It is important to be aware of the relevance of these powers because they often provide the framework which structures ones understanding when looking in on a situation. Krarup and Munk give an example:

“Most studies in education focus on attainment, the prime political value diffused in the educational system (rather than, for instance, well-being, coping with lacking resources, etc). By thus accepting the value system of the political elite, researchers implicitly take sides in a normative struggle for legitimacy” (Krarup and Munk, 2014, p15)

This recognition that a wider conceptualisation of education is possible (and as

will be argued is often embodied within alternative provision schools), leads to Bourdieu's notion of an avant-garde. This notion is related to challenge to and change of the status quo, "one avant-garde displaces a previous avant-garde" (Grenfell and James, 2004, p510). This concept seems somewhat similar to Thomas Khun's (1962) idea of a scientific revolution in capturing the way in which a real change will involve a re-framing and a different articulation of the position/problem. It is thought that alternative provision schooling can play the role of an avant-garde to mainstream schooling, an entirely different conceptualisation of education which is in a position to perceive, move to and open up a space that runs counter to the present orthodoxy (Grenfell and James, 2004). This will be pursued in making recommendations to mainstream schooling, not as simple criticism but rather as an attempt to perceive the root of the issue and attempt to realign the very argument itself into more productive territory.

## **5.6 The medium is the message – Connecting theory and research**

Before moving in to a full discussion of the findings it is helpful to consider a number of other connections between the theory outlined and the research under discussion first relating to the field concept then to the notion of habitus.

This view of social reality made up of fields where individuals embody a certain habitus reflexive to their environment has implications for any understanding of schooling. As suggested by Hodkinson et al. below:

"a learning culture should not be understood as the context or environment within which learning takes place. Rather, learning culture stands for the social practices through which people learn. We agree with Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 35), when they state that:

In our view, learning is not merely situated in practice—as if it were some independently reifiable process that just happened to be located somewhere; learning is an integral part of generative

social practice in the lived-in world” (Hodkinson et al., 2007, p419).

Using Bourdieu’s field and habitus to underpin understanding, the focus is on what others would call the hidden curriculum or unstructured learning. Given that ‘learning is an integral part of generative social practice’ what do the differences between mainstream and alternative provision mean/communicate/make possible or not? Hodkinson’s understanding of learning cultures has significant parallels with Marshall McLuhan’s widely used phrase ‘the medium is the message’ (1966) – it is the total situation not just what is taught that matters, thus the use of field theory. Once an understanding of the field of alternative provision has been developed it will be possible for practitioners and researchers to use this to enhance and structure their engagement with and understanding of their localised situation. This is similar to the way in which Hodkinson et al. (2007) suggest their research on the field of FE could be used/developed.

The fundamental critique of education/schooling levelled by the notion of habitus is that intelligence/culture worth learning about is essentially entirely relative and determined by power relations:

“the concept of habitus bridges the analysis of ‘intelligence’ and ‘culture’ on the one hand and the appreciation of students by the educational system on the other, focusing on how the latter is better suited for and approves more of some students than of others” (Krarup and Munk, 2014, p9)

As such, the solution for low achievers will never be to make them more like high achievers. So when making recommendations it will be interesting to connect the pupil experience types discussed in the findings chapters with the question

of what an educational structure which did not marginalise these pupils would look like.

Other than enabling the development of a holistic picture of mainstream and alternative provision schooling the main way in which the notion of habitus will facilitate the analysis of the research findings is to recognise that habitus can and does change; that learning can facilitate this change (remembering that the medium is the message when it comes to learning cultures); and most importantly, that moving field position can significantly shift an individual's perception of the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) (Ferrare and Apple, 2014) (Krarup and Munk, 2014) (Hodkinson et al., 2007). This has serious implications for what can be considered possible, in terms of positive change, for pupils who attend alternative provision. This will be because they will be immersed in a totally different learning culture which will develop their habitus in fundamentally different ways to mainstream schooling; and secondly, because moving to the field of alternative provision schooling will entail a reorientation, realignment and reassessment of their position and the possibilities which are open to them. As Ferrare and Apple put it:

“Bourdieu's understanding of field theory suggests that consequential social actions are generated in the relationship between structured spaces of positions and position-takings that are mediated by a habitus making sense of what appears possible from certain vantage points vis-à-vis other positions ... the perception of positional possibilities is situated in the habitus, and thus it is through the habitus that agents perceive a horizon of probable choices, tastes, preferences, styles or stances (i.e. position-takings)” (Ferrare and Apple, 2014, p46-47).

In other words, a change of position will lead to a change of habitus which will lead to a change of perception. It will be argued that a broader horizon of

possible options than the restrictive one experienced in mainstream schooling will be encountered by pupils whose experiences lead them into alternative provision (similarly Hodkinson et al., 2007).

In the paper used to frame the understanding of schooling and its functions developed in the literature review Willis “positions the school as the site and instrument through which cultural responses to material conditions are played out” (Willis, 2003, p390). This is the subject to which the next chapter turns in outlining the findings of this research. In doing so it will introduce and integrate the theoretical insight from field theory with the data collected.



## **6 Findings: mainstream and alternative provision schooling as fields**

In response to the research questions and in the context of the analytical framework developed using Bourdieu's field theory a model of pupil experience types has emerged. It encapsulates:

1. differences between mainstream and alternative provision schooling
2. 'types of experience' of pupils who don't fit the mainstream approach to schooling (and who therefore end up in alternative provision),
3. what successful practice could achieve with these 'pupil experience types'

The findings from the study are structured in three chapters corresponding to this model.

### **6.1 The systemic nature of mainstream schooling**

Two sets of data from the study contribute to understanding the differences between mainstream and alternative provision schooling. The survey with alternative provision heads provides descriptive data demonstrating what alternative education offers, and some perceptions of this. The interviews with young people provide richer, qualitative data regarding the comparison between mainstream and alternative provision schooling.

#### **6.1.1 The views of alternative education head teachers**

The twenty-six survey respondents provided background information in terms of their personal motivation and also relating to qualifications and curriculum available at their school.

##### **6.1.1.1 Previous experience:**

Experience in the field of education was most frequently mentioned by those responding when asked to outline their previous experience with 21 out of 26 mentioning involvement in some form of education. Other common themes were experience of management – 11 out of 26; involvement in some form of social care – eight out of 26 including one who referenced learning 'theories and

practices of healing through art', work relating to employment and life skills – four out of 26 and work with probation/offenders or in a secure unit – 2 out of 26.

Alongside the unsurprising dominance of references to previous experience in education the other areas which are mentioned help develop our understanding of how providers see their role. It is perhaps easy to forget that alternative provision schools are for the most part businesses with the related concerns of budgeting income and expenditure, managing employees, legal responsibilities and keeping abreast of relevant policy and legislation. It is a helpful reminder that those who have had experience in management and running businesses feel it worthy of mentioning as relevant experience and these concerns must be kept in mind when considering the structural constraints and the nature of the field of alternative provision schooling.

References to experience of different forms of social care, including work in probation and with young offenders, underscore that young people who attend alternative provision will often have a much greater range of needs than merely educational and, if a placement is to be effective, these will have to be acknowledged and met in some form as a part of the placement. Similarly, given the needs with which young people often present on arrival at alternative provision, experience of developing employment skills is clearly relevant and helpful.

***6.1.1.2 Initial and on-going motivation to work in alternative provision:***

The most dominant theme reported was a desire to help young people with 13 out of 26 respondents expressing their initial motivation in these terms. Also important were views about the limitations of mainstream schooling in terms of meeting the needs of young people – five out of 26.

It is generally acknowledged that teaching of all kinds is a demanding profession, and teaching in alternative education might be expected to present particular challenges (Taylor, 2012). Regarding on-going motivation, 14 respondents said they were motivated by the impact that they have. For example, one provider commented:

“Seeing the positive changes young people make in their lives with the right support”

And another:

“I know what we do really does have positive impact”

Eleven identified a specific passion for their work (often framed as or alongside job satisfaction) and eight the opportunity to facilitate learning.

#### ***6.1.1.3 Curriculum and Qualifications***

A common criticism of alternative provision is that the curriculum can be restricted (Russell and Thomson 2011, Gazeley 2010, Williamson 2009). Twenty five heads shared information about the subjects undertaken at their provision details of which are given in the table below:

Figure 6.1 – Subjects most frequently taught

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Number of providers</b>
English	21
Maths	21
PHSE/Citizenship	16
Catering/Cooking	15
Sport	15
IT	14
Art	12
Science	12
Humanities	11
Music	10
DT	8
Mechanics	6

Highlighting the specialised nature of alternative provision schooling, twenty providers identified ‘other’ subjects broadly focussed around vocational, practical and creative opportunities as shown in Figure 6.2:

Figure 6.2 – Details of other subjects offered

Child Care	Health & Social Care	Construction
Horticulture	Equine	Photography
Conservation	Beauty Therapy	Music making and DJ Skills
Dance	Business and Admin	Media
Animal care	Drama / Role play	Woodwork
Forest School	Fishing	General Studies

Courses which focussed on social and emotional development were mentioned by four providers, again reminding us of the caring focus of much of what

happens in alternative provision. Courses which specifically relate to the world of work were mentioned by four providers. These included retail, CSCS card, warehousing, health and safety at work and employability skills. Alongside the focus on care in alternative provision this shows up the future orientation of what providers do in seeking to prepare for life beyond the centre. Interestingly, one of the providers responded by saying that talking in terms of subjects and qualifications did not get at what they do and the 'true value' of their service and that their 'outcomes and successes are not certificated' (Havenship Life Skills). This is certainly something the researcher would recognise. Seeking to measure success in terms of qualifications means acquiescing to the dominance of the mainstream paradigm of success (Krarup and Munk, 2014). What is needed is a wider understanding of what success looks like in alternative provision settings (DCSF, 2008).

#### ***6.1.1.4 Qualifications available***

Fifteen of the twenty six providers offered GCSEs suggesting that perhaps availability of qualifications is less of an issue than is sometimes supposed (Taylor, 2012). However, there may well be a lot more going on than simply whether something is available or not, in that providers may be working to support young people to a point where they are able to move on to other education where they are able to access further qualifications. Entry level certificates (below GCSE level) were offered by fifteen providers, twelve providers offered Btec qualifications, ten offered AQA units, eight ASDAN qualifications and Adult learning qualifications were offered by another eight providers.

Other qualifications were offered by 17 providers. These included Functional Skills, City and Guild diplomas, unspecified level one and two qualifications. One provider offered a first aid qualification, and as mentioned before another enabled students to get a CSCS card and one provider offered A levels where this was appropriate (this provider caters for 16+).

#### **6.1.1.5 Grounded theoretical development**

The difficulty of catering to pupils with conflicting needs was raised by one head who said:

“a lot of these students do need peace quiet and are agitated by background noise and if you heap these together with EBD kids, you’re going to have more than background noise, you’re going to have in your face noise”

This challenge, of working with groups of pupils with diverse and complex needs, is fundamental to alternative provision schooling and evidenced in the statistics relating to pupil backgrounds (see Chapter 2). The figures show that it is simply not the case that alternative provision caters solely to pupils who have been excluded from the mainstream setting – and in any case, excluded students are known to have complex personal, family and educational histories (Hayden, 1997; Daniels et al., 2004). As noted by the head quoted above, this can make for difficult dynamics within alternative provision settings and raises questions about how these dynamics affect the experience of the young people who find themselves in this environment.

Another strand of thought which was present in the field interviews with providers and developed significantly throughout the rest of the research process related to the nature of schooling and outcomes:

“... I don’t think the key issues are education, as I said before... I think education, it’s really, its key to what we do, but it’s more involved with you’ve got to live another 50 years, what you going to do with it? I mean, it doesn’t mean they have to get a job, they can, you know, they can just hobo it around the world, I just want them to want something... if they want to just busk, go out on the street and busk. I don’t think they

should sort of conform and I don't want to teach people to just conform to society"

This head's understanding of schooling is broad: it is about setting young people up for the rest of their lives, wanting pupils to be motivated by something, and recognising that schooling can often perpetuate social norms rather than setting young people up to respond creatively to their situations.

#### **6.1.2 The views of young people**

Not all the young adults interviewed set out clearly the differences between mainstream and alternative provision. It is also true that the researcher came to the field work and analysis with ideas about there being different theoretical underpinnings to the education that takes place in mainstream and alternative provision schools. However the structural difficulties associated with mainstream schooling, and the way in which this contrasted with alternative provision, emerged as a strong theme.

The young adults interviewed saw the dominant focus of mainstream schooling as the drive towards exams and qualifications. This was achieved by working in a highly systematic way. Young adults had experienced the need to fit into the pre-specified timetabling and options available so as not to be rejected from the system. The flip side of this description of mainstream schooling as working *systematically* to produce qualifications was that alternative provision schooling was considered to work *relationally* to prepare students for their next step.

The constraints of mainstream schooling were in the most part connected to the sheer scale of the organisational undertaking. Numbers of pupils and class sizes were regularly mentioned with an understanding that teachers would get to know classes rather than pupils. Interviewees felt that there was unlikely to be any relationship with staff unless a really good teacher came along; these individuals tended to be in positions of responsibility, therefore teaching less and

so with greater capacity to spend time with individuals. It was noted that there was little if any flexibility or rule bending, and if a pupil is misbehaving in a mainstream classroom they would be sent out. This led to some of the young adults interviewed feeling like an inconvenience to the mainstream system, and a strong feeling that the priority was on qualifications / statistics and set approaches to teaching and learning.

It was noted by the young adults interviewed that the schools' focus was on statistics, in particular Ofsted. There were, in fact, a number of accounts of exclusion linked in some way to the presence of Ofsted in the school (see also Gazeley, 2010). In one case the young person was due to return to school after a fixed period exclusion, but due to Ofsted's presence were met at the gate with some work to take home. The reason given for the extension of exclusion was that he was not wearing the correct footwear, even though he had been in school and wearing the same shoes over previous weeks. Accounts of teaching and learning focussed on having to learn particular things or in particular ways. At some times covering too great a range of topics, at other times subjects and available options being considered irrelevant. Interviewees struggled with lessons where the focus was on covering the required material rather than addressing individual needs. While understandable in the light of organisational constraints, this was not conducive to learning for these pupils.

#### ***6.1.2.1 Alternative provision schooling***

'Personalisation', or attention to individual needs, was perceived very differently in relation to alternative provision. Here the experience was overwhelmingly positive, often involving choice. Although in some cases interviewees had struggled to know what they wanted to do or were interested in, many were positively influenced by the opportunity to focus on topics or subjects in which they were interested. Relationships were fundamental to the practice the young adults had experienced in alternative provision schooling. Participants felt that staff usually managed the tension between flexibility and authority well.



Flexibility was denoted by a willingness to try hard to make things work if at all possible. The successful negotiation of authority was evident in experiences of positive and helpful relationships: words such as 'family', 'homely' and 'friends' were frequently used to describe the environment. Relationships at alternative provision schools were also frequently described as particularly encouraging and often resulted in broadening aspiration and looking to take next steps. There were also numerous experiences of unstructured learning, development of work skills and enjoyment of learning.

It is right to recognise that an informal approach will also have downsides and some interviewees discussed these – in one instance this was due to poor negotiation between flexibility and authority but also connected to some of the experiences of narrowing and over-simplification discussed later in this chapter.

In comparison to mainstream, narrowing and simplification of learning were often discussed in terms of not learning as much or the 'right things'. One interviewee who had attended a 'one theme' provision found this too narrow and limiting as they moved on, but others did not seem held back by their experience of the same provision.

Examinations/qualifications were an important part of every interviewees' narratives giving lie to the idea that these young people do not recognise the importance of education. Some expressed concern that this aspect of alternative education could be problematic; examples included being entered for lower tier examinations and in one instance being told they would be able to take GCSEs but after a college course that did not need this qualifications was found the GCSEs never took place.

On the other hand, enjoyment of learning and interest in specific topics was important. Alternative provision schooling was described as providing the time to

be able to get interested in something and really progress in it and for one interviewee, the teaching they got on the subject they enjoyed “kept me interested in the subject that I loved even when I was feeling pretty crap about everything else”. The learning of social, emotional and practical skills also formed an important theme in participant accounts. Learning to get on with people, how to socialise, building confidence and developing self-awareness were key themes, in addition to more specific employment-related skill building. These had later proved to be useful skills in a work context.

## **6.2 Alternative provision and mainstream schooling as fields**

In the light of these findings, mainstream schooling will now be considered through the lens of field, habitus and capital.

### **6.2.1 Field: mainstream**

The findings contribute to the wider literature in indicating that mainstream schooling is systemically rigid and impersonal with tight expectations of how it is resourced. This enables schooling en masse but also makes for a complex system in which issues, concerns and individuals can be lost. Those who have not developed the necessary habitus to succeed in this structure, unless swift to adapt, can end up marginalised or excluded. The scale of mainstream secondary schooling means that any pupil is usually around one in a thousand which limits the level of relationship and understanding it is possible for staff to develop with pupils, especially as teachers are specialists and so spend at most three or four periods a week with any group of pupils.

Young adults who had fallen out of the mainstream system talked of a lack of resources in terms of human capacity to attend to the needs of those who are presenting challenging behaviour. It may be the case that in each class they teach a teacher develops good relationships with a small number of their pupils. It may even be the case that they try to focus on pupils who do not embody the characteristics necessary to succeed in mainstream schooling. However, even if

this is the case, the complexity and inflexibility of the system as a whole is likely to disrupt this potentially fruitful beginning. From the young person's perspective, it may be the case that one or two teachers do take time to develop a relationship with them that may enable the development of the habitus to succeed in mainstream. But even if a teacher has developed an understanding relationship with a pupil, both still exist in a wider system which requires certain norms of behaviour and adherence to school rules. A teacher may well understand that enforcing the behavioural code within a particular situation may be detrimental but may have little alternative because the school requires adherence to these codes to function.

There is a similar inflexibility of curriculum. Mainstream schooling is better resourced than alternative provision but is more tightly bound by what is conventional in terms of the use of those resources – stepping outside of the conventional academic focus of mainstream schooling is costly. Thus one mainstream secondary head expanded the curriculum with construction courses made available on the school site. These were successful but oversubscribed and expensive. Similarly Kim was not able to study childcare in mainstream and was told this was something she would have to do at college or in her free time. Mainstream schooling is inflexible in part because of the structure itself and in part because of those who inhabit it. The way in which this objectified structure is embodied by those who inhabit this space is addressed below.

#### **6.2.2 Field: alternative provision**

If mainstream schooling is a systemic approach focussed on qualifications, alternative provision schooling is a *relational* approach focussed on progression. It is an approach characterised by choice and by staff who are in a position to know, understand and care for each of the students. There is also a broad understanding of learning, including informal learning.

The small scale of alternative provision schools enables staff to develop 'deep

relationships' and to care for the young people at their school. Young adults' accounts focussed on being known by others, mainly staff but also relationships with other pupils. One young adult connected the smaller scale of alternative provision schooling and the relational knowledge that it brings to the ability to work through any difficulties more effectively. Alternative provision schooling is inherently flexible, there is choice about what to learn and often about how and when to engage. Adherence to timetabling was negotiable as and when necessary. One young adult recalled that there was freedom to take breaks but a responsibility not to abuse this, with an expectation of making up time if this occurred. This freedom and responsibility connects to the different kind of relationship found in alternative provision schooling, made possible by the organisational flexibility. One of the outcomes of this is allowing young people to explore what is and is not permissible in terms of 'banter' in respectful relationships. This is less easy to manage in the mainstream context.

Role autonomy is an important part of the structural flexibility within alternative provision schooling and links to the provider's willingness to go the extra mile when it comes to student placements. As well as being teacher's role flexibility meant staff were willing and able to work on difficulties students had at home. Staff were also empowered to deal with issues as and when they arose, and were fully involved in the care of all students at the school.

A final consideration of the objectified structure of alternative provision schooling is the level of resourcing within the sector. As outlined above there can be significant gaps in funding when one group of students leave before the next group arrive (see Chapter 2). Indeed some young adults mentioned provisions which had simply closed down overnight. This can lead to a lack of facilities, a shortage of qualified teaching staff and ultimately undermine the ability to meet pupils' educational needs. This was not the opinion of all the young adults interviewed but it is an important factor. Alternative provision

head teachers agreed that stable resourcing would make a good policy focus for coming years. Other young adults considered their alternative provision to have been well resourced in terms of the subjects taught, perhaps because some alternative provision schools focus resourcing on a small number of specialisms.

### **6.2.3 Habitus: mainstream**

This section will explore how those within the mainstream system embody, perpetuate and challenge the field. The main constraint leading to the embodiment of the objectified structure by teachers is time. Teachers do not have much un-timetabled time in their day and can end up conveying a feeling of causing inconvenience to pupils who raise things which disrupt these timescales. Jenny referred to feeling like an inconvenience in mainstream schooling, or as Carl put it, he felt like a 'less'. Thus for pupils, embodiment of the dominant habitus involves internalising both inferiority in the teacher pupil relationship and the limited value of their opinions and experiences which would disrupt the normal practice of the school (see also Lumby, 2012, Smyth and Hattam, 2004, and Youdell, 2003). For teachers Sam expressed the simultaneously objectified (don't have time to listen) and embodied (don't want to listen) nature of the problem. To be able to exist in a situation where there is not time to listen many teachers will end up conveying to pupils that they do not want to listen. Even the teachers who explain that they do want to listen but they just don't have the time right now may end up falling into the perceived category of 'don't want to listen' for marginalised pupils.

The inferiority embodied by pupils in their subordination to teachers is further enforced by the dominance of a teacher's account of any event over that of a pupil. As Charlotte said:

"the trouble is, when you're in a high school they take it from a teachers perspective ... they always stick with the teacher, which is fair enough but I felt that's the reason why they're slipping through the cracks because not all

the time the teacher is right and if a student tries to have that altercation to either prove that they are right or prove their innocence then that goes against them and that's when they fall through".

The nature of the field means that the teacher's account must dominate for stability to be perpetuated (again Lumby, 2012, also Gillborn, 1988). It is also clear that this is embodied for those who are successful within the field. Those who are not, pupils who do not accept their 'inferiority', can end up excluded from the field. The structure of the school imposes limits in terms of timetabling, funding geared towards normative academic achievement, and the outcomes considered successful. These lead to a teaching approach which involves the embodiment of impatience and a focus on conveying knowledge. The young adults remembered frustration from teachers when pupils struggled with what was being taught. They also experienced teachers who appeared bored by what they were teaching.

There is more negotiation over curriculum than any other area of the field but the hegemony of academic learning to the detriment of other kinds of learning is significant and only intensified by the moves towards an 'English Baccalaureate' (see chapter 3). Despite the need for workers who are highly skilled in their crafts in the wider economy the dominant measure of success within schooling remains whether a pupil has achieved five A\* to C grades in academic qualifications (see also, Pring, 2010). This led some young adults to talk of the mainstream school curriculum and of the learning that took place in mainstream as lacking in relevance. It has also been reported that young people do not feel themselves to be unable, but the way in which teaching is undertaken is monotonous and lacking in physical activity (Lumby, 2012). (See also Pring (2010) on the impoverished idea of success within the academic tradition.) For young adults for whom the internalisation and embodiment of inferiority was lacking, their willingness to speak out against a curriculum perceived as irrelevant led to

further marginalisation because of the threat they posed to the stability of the field (again Lumby, 2012).

The final aspect embodied by those working in the field connects once more to the lack of time for relationships within the mainstream system and also to the growing dominance of the neoliberal paradigm within the field of schooling more generally (see Ball, 2015). This aspect is depersonalisation. Schools relied on notes rather than getting to know the young person when considering whether their position within the school was viable (see also Pring, 2010). Thus it is important that staff internalise and embody an acceptance and reliance of standardised measures of behaviour and success (again Ball, 2015). For pupils, they must once more acquiesce to the belief that these documents hold the truth of the situation even if their experience is different and also must accept their relative irrelevance, it is not what they say but what it says on the paper that matters.

#### **6.2.4 Habitus: alternative provision**

As argued above, the primary means by which alternative provision schools work is through relationships. Characteristics of relationships in alternative provision schools are: listening, equality – including feeling like an adult, mutual respect, staff avoiding unnecessarily authoritarian approaches, being willing to apologise and share life experiences. Similarly providers characterised what they did as building safe, supportive, therapeutic, and trusting relationships. Young adults articulated the relationships found at alternative provision by using words such as friendly, homely and family and being encouraged by staff in their work and in relation to their future.

The culture of relationships outlined above leads to the embodiment of habitus which for staff involves care, respect and professionalism, an understanding of the potency of meaningful relationships, and a highly professional approach which is sensitive to the nuance needed to work successfully in challenging

situations (see Lumby, 2012). This can be seen as an ability to hold the tension between structure and flexibility (see, Tiffany and Pring, 2008). In alternative provision schooling staff develop good relationships with young people which puts them in a position to enable learning to take place, using humour and encouragement to displace other forms of discipline. For students this relational culture leads to the internalisation of responsibility alongside respect and more equal adult relationships. Moving from mainstream to alternative provision schooling led to the embodiment of a different kind of habitus; as Carl said: “it changed your mind set ... entirely changed the way I acted”. Students’ good relationships with staff helped with confidence in building relationships and with feelings of security.

There is a broad conceptualisation of success within alternative provision schooling, including awareness of the importance of informal learning which does not only take place in timetabled lessons. Thus it is in the people with whom they work that alternative providers see their success with one provider saying their “outcomes and successes are not certificated”. Providers are concerned with meeting present needs but also with seeing pupils move on successfully into the rest of their lives. This understanding and approach to success leads to the embodiment of habitus which for staff involves a desire to teach but a flexibility about what is taught as well as how and when. There is also the internalisation of a focus on care and support for student’s progression in life. For students, the embodiment of the habitus aligned to this aspect of the field of alternative provision schooling involves taking seriously their progression but freed from the hegemony of academic achievement. The influence of this force is, however, strong and may persist in both embodied and objectified structures outside of mainstream schooling.

Within alternative provision there is an inherent assumption of a root cause to difficult behaviour. For staff habitus involves an embodiment of the avoidance of



pathologising students and looking for wider structural and experiential factors when considering difficult situations or behaviour. Students' habitus will commonly involve developing a reflective disposition.

The teaching approach within alternative provision schooling was caring, supportive and indirect, again underscoring the understanding of informal learning. Students articulated their experience of this by describing a culture of patience, relationship and care. Personalisation was important and as well as the fundamental importance of tailoring work to pupil's interests there was also the time to get interested in topics that were being studied. In addition personalisation was seen to have relational and behavioural dimensions in addition to the educational dimensions already mentioned. The curriculum was flexible and relevant and young adults also referred to the importance of having the reasoning behind learning certain topics explained to them. The emphasis on relevance related to learning skills needed in the workplace and adult life and also the arrangement of work experience was valued. Choice regarding curriculum was important and matching up an individual's interests to the subjects they are learning about can be highly motivating and was a frequent occurrence with students able to input into their learning. The teaching approach and curriculum found in the field of alternative provision schooling connects to a habitus which for staff means the embodiment of patience and perseverance whereas for pupils involves the internalisation of an acceptance of working/grown up life necessitating particular skills and abilities which can be developed in schooling. Students will also begin to internalise and embody a belief that when your voice has been heard and respected it is your responsibility to respond in kind by working. Given the role of alternative provision this is not essential for inhabitation of the field and may well not be fully internalised before leaving alternative provision.

#### 6.2.5 Capital(s) in mainstream

Having considered the objectified and embodied structure of the two fields it is now time to consider the capital at play in them. Bourdieu's concept of capital has three strands: economic, social and cultural capital. Economic capital is represented by the financial resources available to an individual and their family. Although the causal chain is likely to be complex, all available exclusion figures show a higher rate of attendance at alternative provision for pupils who qualify for free school meals. In relation to alternative provision, it is possible to distinguish an appreciation of the implications of poverty in providers' responses about providing resources to pupils. The support offered to students is most frequently food but travel, clothing and toiletries are common too. In addition one provider offered contraception / pregnancy testing and on a few occasions it had been necessary to provide support with accommodation. However, economic capital does not figure strongly in the data collected in this project so the analysis of economic capital is left for exploration elsewhere.

Social capital can be considered marginal in a pupil's ability to embody the necessary habitus to be able to take their place within the field of mainstream schooling although may well be involved in negotiating a successful transition when change is required. The number and type of social connections a pupil and their family possess clearly plays a part in the negotiation of the nature of exclusion that occurs and the provision which is subsequently put in place. Lucy is a particularly good example of this, but there was also evidence of this in the experiences of Josh, Liz and Kim. Parents who are particularly engaged in the social process of exclusion were seen to make a difference to the course of events and outcome of the exclusion process (as Brodie, 1999). There are also connections here when it comes to progressing into the world of work and putting in place work experience.

It is however the concept of *cultural* capital which is most dominant in the data and will be the frame for this analysis of the capital at play in the field of

mainstream schooling. It can be summarised as having three key features:

1. Playing the game by the rules – *fitting neatly into the system* which involves assuming, or at least appearing to assume a level of inferiority or insignificance.
2. Aiming for the prize – accepting the premise of mainstream schooling as leading to qualifications and beyond that to work or further education or training and then work. This is broadly reliant upon the above, fitting neatly into the system, but also upon academic ability. The ability to play the academic achievement game will increase a pupils standing within the school, at least from the school system's point of view, and thereby ameliorate for some level of discrepancy when it comes to fitting neatly into the system. Although playing by the rules is the far more important capital at play within the field of mainstream schooling.
3. Negotiating with competitors – more important than (2.) but perhaps less important than fitting into the system as a whole is a pupil's ability to negotiate a successful, or at least survivable, position within the whole school pupil population. This capital was particularly relevant to those who had experienced bullying as a reason for ending up in alternative provision schooling.

#### **6.2.6 Capital(s) in alternative provision**

Similarly, a number of factors are present in the cultural capital at play in relation to alternative provision. Playing the relationships game is more important than engaging in the qualifications game as will be recognised in the following. One of the reasons given by providers for pupils moving on from specific alternative settings was a lack of interest or engagement, thus underlining that the capital at play in the field of alternative provision is not solely relational. Alternative provision often aims to meet specific interests of students, and thus showing an interest in learning something is a form of capital. However, given the nature of

the field many providers will seek to develop relationships which will lead to learning rather than expecting learning to be possible without this foundation in place. Developing relationships is a key part of learning at alternative provision and the ability and willingness to do this is a type of capital at work in alternative provision settings. As seen above these relationships are characterised by mutual respect.

There is an understanding, again outlined above, that being within the field of alternative provision schooling is a learning experience and developing these relationships will take time and perseverance. Beyond simply building relationships, social learning or getting on with others and developing one's ability to communicate are also part of the capital at play. This is not to say that a student who does not do these things will necessarily experience a breakdown of placement or a change of provision, but perceived likelihood of relational conflict was highlighted by providers as a reason they would not accept a student at their provision. Finally, future orientation, and focus to go on to doing what they want to do has been seen as an outcome of alternative provision and can therefore be considered to be a capital at play. The student who engages well on these terms will fit neatly into the field of alternative provision. The pupil who does not will still have a place – as the very nature of alternative provision is that it exists on the margins picking up those who have fallen out of the mainstream model of schooling. It is best to see the capital at play in the field of alternative provision as conditions which enable a neater fit and a smoother ride but which are not necessary for the habitation of the field.

### **6.3 Alternative provision and mainstream schooling, a comparison**

What has been outlined above is theoretically important and seeks to develop a thorough understanding of the nature of the field of alternative provision schooling in relation to the field of mainstream schooling. This leads towards the second chapter of findings where the capital relevant to the field of mainstream schooling will be connected to the notion of pupil experience types.

The remainder of this chapter will undergird what has been outlined above about the fields of mainstream and alternative provision and will give weight to the ideas to be developed in the next chapters. Using the data from all three stages of the project mainstream and alternative provision schooling will now be considered by theme in three categories, the first category, organisational constraints is aligned to the objectified field and consists of the four themes; scale, flexibility, system and resources. The second category, educational culture is aligned to habitus and is made up of six themes; relationships, success, understanding of acting out, teaching approach, curriculum and personalisation. The final category is outcomes and is aligned to capital.

### **6.3.1 ‘They have 1000 other pupils to think about’**

The first organisational constraint is **scale**. There has of course been much ink spilled in consideration of class sizes and their effects upon learning (see for example Blatchford et al., 2011), but it was uncommon for participants’ accounts to connect scale with learning. Scale was most frequently brought up in relation to the nature of the organisation itself and was commonly tied to narratives of mainstream schooling as systemically rigid and impersonal (see also Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993). The mainstream head teacher who was interviewed in the research made this connection:

“all the systems and policies and rules and regulations that you’ve got to put in place for a thousand children”.

The accounts of the young adults tended to be focussed on the lack of relationship and the impersonal nature of schooling en masse (see also McCluskey, 2008, Gazeley, 2010). A number mentioned class sizes and connected this to difficulties in developing relationships, for example:

“it would be hard for a teacher to, a teacher teaching 30 kids, to listen to

every single one of them children, and to be there for every single one of them” (Josh).

Others talked of teachers getting to know classes rather than individual pupils:

“you get to know them as a class, if it’s a disruptive class or a good class, they don’t get to know you on a one to one or like in a small group” (Charlotte).

And

“how many teachers ... would say right we have an individual here, they don’t because they’re not trained to, they’re trained to see a thirty pupil class and have to get across what they have to get across” (Dean)

Others spoke of the scale of mainstream schooling as a whole:

“Mainstream schools aren’t made to cope, they have 1,000 other pupils to think about” (Lucy)

And

“Fairfield teachers it was hard to know because the school was so huge and I never really knew any of them on a personal level” (Liz)

And one connected this to a lack of resources in terms of human capacity to attend to the needs of those who are presenting challenging behaviour:

“there isn’t the amount of teachers to focus solely on the child that is being destructive” (Emily)

### **6.3.2 'It's a bit closer, you can work out the weak links'**

In contrast alternative provision schooling is almost always on a small scale with providers all agreeing, and seventeen out of twenty three strongly agreeing, that working in small groups is essential for their students. The minimum staff to student ratio reported by a provider was one to ten, however for many it was much lower with the average across all 25 providers coming out at 1:4.2. In addition, of 24 providers who responded to a question about one to one provision, seventeen would provide one to one support for a student if it was necessary while of the other seven, six would do so if resourcing permitted and the other would put one to one support in place if the student needed literacy or numeracy support. Young adult's accounts focussed on being known by others:

“obviously it's less people so you get to know people a bit better ... you're pretty much in the same classes with the same people all the time”  
(Jeremy)

And

“I preferred PLH because they got to know you and your needs and everything else like that” (Charlotte)

Another young adult connected the smaller scale of alternative provision schooling and the knowledge that it brings to the ability to work through any difficulties more effectively:

“In a smaller school like Bowden it's a bit, it's a bit closer, you can work out the weak links quite easier, and work on try and improve them or, if they're just impossible sort of thing like try and work different ways out of how to change it” (Sam)

### 6.3.3 'Kids aren't robots'

The determination found within alternative provision to work for positive change even when things are seemingly 'impossible' connects to the next organisational constraint; **flexibility**. Within mainstream schooling there are limited opportunities to work differently because of the scale and structure of the school (as Gazeley, 2010). Tony, the secondary head interviewed for this research, focussed in on the difficulty of catering for those who didn't fit the standard model of mainstream schooling and who were more creative or entrepreneurial in their approach to life. He felt that for pupils who prefer to go their own way the rules and systems can make them "feel they're being squeezed into a black box". He was concerned that this experience would damage their creativity and went further in connecting this to changes in the curriculum. Kevin, the head of the primary provision interviewed in stage three, connected difficulties with flexibility with the nature of the system. In his experience, there may be staff who are more understanding of a pupils difficulties and are willing to try to be flexible to work with them but the complexity of the system, especially at secondary level, means that:

"they're experiencing different teachers, different personalities and different agendas. Some have a genuine want to support them, others just want them out of the classroom and what I have seen is almost, within some faculties, almost constructing opportunities to have that child out"

Thus, even if there are some within the mainstream system who are more willing to work flexibly, because they are part of a wider organisation which is inherently inflexible, their efforts may ultimately be lost (as Gazeley, 2010).

The young adults' narratives connecting flexibility with mainstream schooling focussed in on timetabling, curriculum and dealing with difficulties. When



discussing timetabling young adults described the almost mechanical nature of secondary schooling:

“the way I always saw school, it was always, this is what you are doing. There is no freedom. You’re doing English at this hour on this day” (Carl)

“In school, mainstream, I guess cos there’s so many of the students they don’t really know, well they don’t really care what’s going on with them, they just want to teach a lesson and, and that’s it” (Jenny)

And

“Mainstream school is so, set pieces, it’s so you will be, at this time, do an hour at this lesson, and then an hour at the next and an hour at the next” (Dean)

As if to further strengthen the metaphor of an almost mechanical system, Dean later went onto say:

“Mainstream needs to become less institutionalised, yeah, that’s the word, yeah, definitely, they need to have and understand that when.. *kids aren’t robots, children aren’t robots*”

This highlights the perception that those on the receiving end of schooling may have of needing to fit into an inflexible system that requires you to leave your humanity and any eccentricities at the door (see Duckett et al., 2010). This is somewhat elaborated upon by those who referred to a lack of flexibility in their experience of having to learn particular things in particular ways:

“you know sometimes when you’re at school and it’s like a set curriculum

and regardless of your ability you have to learn something in a particular way” (Liz)

Or more specifically,

“When I was at Greenlane I did say for a while you know like I wanted to do child care and that and they always said like oh, it’s something you do in your own time or something you do at college” (Kim)

This recognition that those working in the mainstream system are held and bound by its rules and expectations comes through in some of the young adults accounts of staff having to deal with difficult behaviour below:

“In school obviously teachers have to stick to like what they’ve been told to do” (Jeremy)

And

“I can understand why teachers are like that if another child is being disruptive in class they’ve gotta leave the class whereas the Bowden centre would give you chances” (Nadia)

Another young adult did not make connections with being part of a wider structure but saw inflexibility as embodied. A problem which in their account below goes on to be exacerbated by experiences of labelling:

“mainstream teachers are too like I said disciplined and abide by the rules exactly rather than just bend a couple of them to help a couple of pupils out there. Too easy just to throw a pupil into a um, in the spotlight and say, oh if something’s going wrong in the classroom I’m going to point at

you because you're the usual one that does it. That's happened to me quite a lot, where teachers just blamed me because I was the usual suspect even though I hadn't done anything that particular time" (Phil)

Overall it is clear that mainstream schooling can be characterised as inflexible, in part because of the structure itself and in part because of those who inhabit it.

#### **6.3.4 'amazing how much time all of them will give'**

Within alternative provision schooling the accounts of providers and young adults both recognise and articulate a level of flexibility simply not present in mainstream schooling. It is clear that flexibility in alternative provision often takes the form of choice about how and when to engage with learning and not simply of what to learn. Of twenty three providers eighteen agreed, with half of these strongly agreeing, that it was important to be flexible about how and when pupils engaged with learning. When asked whether students, when it is needed, should be allowed time and space to reflect on any difficulties inside or outside the provision rather than having to attend planned sessions twenty of the providers agreed again with half of these strongly agreeing. It is clear then that structural flexibility exists within alternative provision schooling when it comes to expectations of students. In addition to this there is also relational flexibility and role autonomy for staff. In terms of relational flexibility all but one provider agreed that it was important to be able to respond to any student's emotion or response no matter what time of the school day it is. When interviewing one of the providers they articulated relational flexibility, patience and forgiveness, thus:

"it's a hard job and you get very tired...but I think all the staff here are amazing in that respect ... no matter how tired they are, and even if this child has been telling them to fuck off all day, if they suddenly break down at the end of the day and you find out why they've been telling you to fuck off.. amazing how much time all of them will give"

Role autonomy, and providers' willingness to go the extra mile, was highlighted by answers to questions about responding to inappropriate placement of pupils and working with other agencies. In the event of the inappropriate placement of a pupil the overwhelming response of providers is to take responsibility and work towards a solution (16 out of 22 responses). This included discussing with the referrers to plan a course of action, holding professionals' meetings or meeting with referrers, other organisations or colleagues, making arrangement or looking for alternative appropriate provision and holding a statement review to reassess needs. One who suggested this as a course of action also made it clear that they would seek to "move the student on in such a way that the student does not feel that they had failed". Five providers would essentially pass the problem back to the referrer / expect them to find a solution. The other response was essentially that this was very rare and as far as they were aware had not happened because of their 'extremely thorough' admission and induction process. Two other providers also said that this had either never happened or was highly unlikely as other options would only be considered after "all avenues had been explored to ensure that the school were not able to meet the needs". The response which best conveys the providers ethos took an almost parental approach in saying they would "attend anything we can to support the young person".

#### ***6.3.4.1 'a little bit more of freedom and responsibility'***

Young adults' accounts of organisational flexibility tended to focus on the approach of staff regarding adherence to timetabling and relationships but also covered the time available for interactions and the role flexibility of staff. As reported by providers adherence to timetabling was negotiable as and when necessary, one young adult Lucy, put this as:

"It was structured but there were also opportunities for time out or mentoring if that was what you needed. If you needed to leave a lesson you could leave but you were expected to attend and if you were late

they would ask why”

Another young adult, Dean, focussed on the negotiation of breaks. In his experience there was freedom to take a break but responsibility to make up the time if this was abused, there was a “little bit more of freedom and responsibility”. In addition to referring to flexibility around food, drink and uniform Phil explicitly connected the approach to discipline and authority to life after schooling:

“they wouldn’t be too disciplined but they’d still have some authority just to show you that what actual like college and life’s actually going to be like sort of thing, but not too much that it makes you rebel”

His account also focussed in on the way in which staff took a different approach to ‘banter’:

“in PLH and Bowden they’ll either just laugh about it or they’ll say something back to you to make you laugh *and think*, okay fair enough”

Connecting this to Phil’s account above of staff in mainstream abiding by the rules exactly it is possible to see that the organisational flexibility present in alternative provision allows for a different kind of relationship, not possible in mainstream schooling because of organisational constraints. The theme of relationships will be explored in great detail below suffice to say for the time being that there is a connection between structure and learning. The flexibility in alternative provision created a space in which Phil was made to ‘think’ about what was acceptable ‘banter’, not something that was possible for him to learn in mainstream schooling.

#### **6.3.4.2 ‘the teachers just made you feel like you weren’t an inconvenience’**

Organisational flexibility within alternative provision also took the form of the

time staff have available to interact with students. This obviously connects to relationships (discussed below) but it is also helpful to include the experience of another young adult who explicitly contrasts mainstream and alternative provision:

“I think um, the, for the most part the teachers just made you feel like you weren’t an inconvenience um like the mainstream school system can sometimes make you feel. Um, yeah I think that was the most part to be honest, knowing that you’re being taught by somebody who doesn’t find you particularly annoying or is willing to sit with you and explain things to you, um, it does definitely make a big difference” (Liz)

The experience of an environment where timetables were flexible clearly had an effect on the experience that Liz had of interacting with staff but also how she perceived their feelings towards her and therefore her feelings about herself.

Role flexibility has already been mentioned in relation to provider’s accounts but also came through in Jeremy’s experience of staff at the alternative provision he attended. He saw staff as willing and able to work on difficulties students had at home as well as being teachers:

“sometimes they brought your parents in and like sat you down, spoke to you both like tried sorting some stuff out between you and that lot. So in a way they were sort of like social workers as well as teachers and that was really good”

In alternative provision schooling there is flexibility in terms of timetabling and the roles that staff play and, as has been shown above, this is often related to the organisational structure of alternative provision schools.

### **6.3.5 ‘they would pass the matter on’**

The next organisational constraint to be considered is the nature of the **system**. In mainstream provision this relates to the overall complexity and the level of hierarchy in place. We have already seen from Kevin’s account how the complexity of the mainstream schooling system means that one person’s attempts to work flexibly with an individual can be undone by others within the system. Hierarchy within mainstream schooling was raised by Charlotte in relation to sharing difficulties or concerns with staff:

“they would pass the matter on to someone else and then again ... and then like someone else might speak to you down the line or you have to wait for the information to circulate back to the first person for them to be told”

This was confirmed by Jenny’s experience of bullying in mainstream school, when asked whether the school were told about the issues she responded:

“They knew everything ... but I know that they didn’t do anything about it, because I spoke to one of the girls and she said, nah no one spoke to me”

### **6.3.6 ‘everyone is fully involved in decision making’**

In contrast to a complex system in which concerns and issues can get lost, in alternative provision schooling it seems to be that staff are empowered to deal with issues as and when they arise rather than needing to pass them up a chain of command or letting them go unaddressed. Charlotte said in relation to alternative provision staff:

“I think they’re trained more to deal with each case as a whole, so they could deal with the person on a one to one instead of having to involve every other member of staff before they can get to where they need to

go”

Providers’ accounts of their practice in alternative provision back this up. Seventeen out of 23 providers had a key worker system in place. When asked about their most frequently used forms or policies three themes dominated: safeguarding, risk assessment and reporting and communication. When outlining how they sought to support their staff through the difficult experiences they have to deal with whilst working in alternative provision fourteen mentioned regular (at least weekly) staff meetings. Four providers said they had a daily meeting in which staff would have the opportunity to share challenges and off load. Twelve providers mentioned one to one support whether this be formalised in supervision or appraisals or just expressed as ‘time to talk’ or ‘listen’. Nine providers mentioned continuing professional development or putting training in place and six said that they would have a specific response after any incident or challenge during the day. One expressed their approach thus:

“We are lucky to have a very supportive team, who support each other and me as a matter of course. We meet at the end of each day to ensure that all events, phone calls etc. are discussed and everyone is fully involved in decision making around incidents, successes etc. Staff are encouraged to talk about all difficulties to avoid anything festering and becoming more of an issue than it need be. We are a very settled group, which has grown slowly and few staff leave – I think this helps”.

It is clear that the systems in place within alternative provision are small enough to empower all staff to be fully involved in the care of all the students at the centre.

#### **6.3.7 ‘expensive but very successful’**

The final organisational constraint is **resources**. Most of the discussion on



resourcing revolved around alternative provision schooling but mainstream schooling also experiences resource constraints. Tony, the secondary head interviewed for this research, connected resourcing to curriculum. For him, offering an expanded curriculum was a way to engage students who he may otherwise not be able to hold onto, such as a music project:

“we have... done a piece of work with a group of boys who’ve just finished year eleven, the thing that motivated them was music, well we have the typical music department, two very nice white middle class ladies, everyone’s playing violins etc. These boys were coming up in year nine and were all macs, B-TEC music types, we didn’t deliver that so we funded delivering that, those boys have remained engaged, all passed their music B-TEC and we’ve looked and the majority of them are now going on to college, some doing music and continuing, others in apprenticeships, so it’s engaged, there are boys there who would not have stayed in mainstream if we’d not offered that addition to the curriculum, it’s been extraordinary successful, expensive but very successful”

#### **6.3.8 ‘But then that shut down’**

Alternative provision has far less stability of funding than mainstream schools experience. Emily connected this to her experience of the lack of facilities available but also went on to include concerns about the ability within alternative provision to meet the educational needs of all pupils:

“it didn’t have a lot of resources and I think we only did English and maths there and that’s just not enough. So it needs to be well equipped and that’s what I mean like it needs to be like mainstream, just like qualified teachers, right resources, you know, what you need to be able to learn”

Emily was among a number of young adults who relayed experiences of the

alternative provision school they were attending shutting down without notice, underscoring the precarious funding position alternative provision schools may find themselves in. Lucy also had an experience where the resources to work effectively in terms of teaching and learning was an issue:

“I was bored at Church End, they didn’t have the resources to meet my needs, it felt like it was more about babysitting than education, like it was the place you go when people have given up on you”

However, in other young adults’ accounts the alternative provision they attended was well resourced in terms of the subjects taught within the provision. Another young adult’s experience was that there was resourcing within alternative provision that had not been forthcoming within mainstream provision. Kim is quoted above as being told childcare was not an option at her mainstream school while at alternative provision:

“they actually got me the whole, like the whole course, like they got me this book and I’d go through it basically like I’d write it out then do it on the computer and they sent it off for me and I got certificates at home from the cash foundation”

To summarise the difference between mainstream and alternative provision in terms of resourcing, it is safe to say that mainstream schooling is better resourced in general although more tightly bound by conventional use of those resources. Alternative provision tends to be less well-resourced and this can effect availability of qualified teachers. Other accounts are positive about the presence of the resources needed to pursue particular interests.

#### **6.3.9 ‘I don’t really think they listen as much as they should’**

The first theme of educational culture is **relationships**. This was one of the most prominent themes from all the accounts collected in this research. As has

already been seen, the constraints of mainstream schooling can mean a pupil experiences very limited time for interaction with staff. If they have something to raise which disrupts the system they can end up feeling they are bothering the teacher, that they are an 'inconvenience'. It is possible to see this as systemic in origin. Teachers' days are highly structured by timetabling and they have little opportunity to be flexible. Pupils disrupting these timescales do present a difficulty. The use of Bourdieu's concepts of field and habitus enable us to understand the system and those who inhabit it as part of an integrated whole. The structure influences any given situation, but the rules governing the system are also embodied and maintained by those involved. Accounts from other young adults interviewed also discussed the theme of relationships, some in similar structural terms, others more in terms of agency (this dualism is reconciled in Bourdieu's field theory). Josh perceived the difficulties a teacher would have in attempting to listen to each child they taught in that they have a 'job to do' (teaching) and that they have to do this with groups of thirty pupils at a time. Thus 'it would be hard' to 'listen to' and to 'be there' for every one of them. Below, Paul introduces the possibility that a teacher could be good if they engage with their pupils:

"Teachers in high school are good but only to a certain point unless you've got a really good teacher that actually interacts"

Helpful pupil teacher relationships can be formed. Sam experienced a deputy head who ran groups for pupils who were struggling in mainstream schooling, taking the time to listen to them and respond to their concerns as well as to challenge their behaviour when it was appropriate to do so. It is instructive that it was a deputy head teacher, who it can be assumed would have fewer teaching sessions timetabled, who ran these groups. Sam also recounted that when this deputy head left the school the group sessions stopped. This reinforces that it was not a school priority but that of an individual within the system which led to

the group taking place. The system reverted to norm when the instigator left. In a longer discussion of the importance of listening to pupils Sam connects this to an informative understanding that the school should 'belong' to the students just as much as it belongs to those running it:

"I think a lot of the times the teachers either don't have time to listen or don't want to listen really to what you say. And I think obviously that does that, like I said stresses the students out cos they feel like they're not being listened to and *it's obviously their school as well*, they're the one.. they've got to go there every day as well. And if they feel they're not being listened to and, then they're not going to want to be there. I think yeah, I think it's the mutual respect of ... knowing you can say something that you feel passionate about and you're going to get listened to"

Sam articulates the simultaneously objectified (don't have time to listen) and embodied (don't want to listen) nature of the problem and beings to consider the effect of moving away from this position, to one of mutual respect where there is time and willingness to listen (see also Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993). Thus a changed relationship is not only morally right – 'it's obviously their school as well' – but also elicits a different response, '*mutual* respect', from those who experience it. Similarly Carl contrasts feeling like a 'less' in mainstream with feeling like an adult in alternative provision:

"It's so much more on the friendlier, treating you like an adult level, and it changed the way, *it changed your mind set* when you were there, cos it wasn't, when you were in school you were a pupil, you were a student ... but you feel lesser, you feel like a less, whilst when you go into, when you go into these alternative provisions, it's, um, you feel as if you are an adult with these people and that boosts your confidence, it boosted my

confidence like, *entirely changed the way I acted*"

Carl's experience of a different kind of relationship led to change, which begins to consider the kind of relationships at play within alternative provision.

Charlotte's account below takes the theme of pupil inferiority and connects it to exclusion:

"the trouble is, when you're in a high school they take it from a teachers' perspective and not so much a students', it's like who do you believe, the student or the teacher, and they always stick with the teacher, which is fair enough but I felt that's the reason why they're slipping through the cracks because not all the time the teacher is right"

The nature of the relationships in mainstream schooling, themselves dependent on / constructed by the system, means that a teacher's account of an event dominates. Students can end up being marginalised from the system itself because of the lack of space for them to articulate their experience:

"if a student tries to have that altercation to either prove that they are right or prove their innocence then that goes against them and that's when they fall through" (Charlotte)

#### **6.3.10 'humour and cajoling'**

We have seen above that being listened to, taken seriously and treated like an adult are some of the hallmarks of relationships in alternative provision schooling. In alternative provision staff and students are almost always on first name terms – out of twenty three responses, sixteen selected 'always true' and five 'somewhat true'. Beyond this, numerous other characteristics were mentioned by providers. These included: mutual respect, avoiding unnecessarily authoritarian approaches, being willing to apologise, sharing life experiences and building safe, supportive, therapeutic, trusting relationships. When asked about

the importance of equal and respectful relationships between staff and students providers' responses were clearly skewed towards agreement with fifteen of twenty three strongly agreeing and five agreeing. All but one of the twenty three respondents agreed with sixteen of these strongly agreeing that 'staff need to be patient and willing to forgive inappropriate student behaviour'. When asked about whether it was unhelpful for staff to be authoritarian in their general approach to students there was still a skew towards agreement. However one provider disagreed and two strongly disagreed. This response is likely to be about a consideration of risk or dangerous situations as this was raised by providers in the trial:

"If it's to keep everybody safe... there are times when you will have to... it's a very small amount of time I would be authoritarian, they respect me, they see me as an authority figure they see that you can give the last ruling on something, but a lot of getting them to do what you want them to do is done with just humour and cajoling"

The above quote emphasises the importance of humour and persistence in a situation where unwarranted authority is unlikely to yield a positive response. Reflecting the importance of relationships within alternative provision schooling, providers reported a high level of staff consensus regarding apologising to a student if the member of staff has done something wrong which had impacted on the student. Seventeen of 23 respondents strongly agreed and four agreed that this was the case. It is important to note that this question was framed in terms of staff consensus not just the head of centre's opinion, reinforcing the widespread acknowledgement of the importance of good relationships within alternative provision schooling.

One way in which meaningful balanced relationships develop is through sharing the difficulties and challenges of life. When asked about appropriate sharing

there was a skew towards this being considered helpful by providers with the majority agreeing. Thirteen agreed and three strongly agreed, three providers were ambivalent, three disagreed and one strongly disagreed. One of the providers commented on this question before the survey was finalised:

“This is interesting um. I think I’m going to agree with that, not strongly agree I’m going to agree with it. I see that as being relationship education, would be a key thing and in a relationship there is that aspect of perspective so certainly I shared in morning meeting with pupils my challenges as my mum had a terminal illness and um we were able to draw out other things so I think it can be ... some really interesting work done on it... but so it can be helpful but it needs to be informed by educational situations because it’s never good for an adult to in any context to put their problems onto a child. That’s damaging and has damaged a lot of the pupils we are with so, with care and education in mind”

In understanding the importance and potency of meaningful relationships, alternative provision heads are also highly professional and aware of the nuanced approach needed to work successfully in challenging situations. When asked specifically about whether the development of meaningful and therapeutic relationships between staff and students was part of what providers sought to achieve there was total agreement with fifteen providers strongly agreeing. In addition to this recognition of the importance of caring relationships, providers also understood relationships at alternative provision in terms of learning social skills. There was a clear skew towards agreement that it was important for students to be able to try out different types of relationships within the provision (examples given were, adult-adult, child-adult, employee-employer). In response to questions about theories they draw on and what their provision offers that mainstream cannot a number of providers focussed in on

caring relationships. Three of these responses are included below:

“There must be a theory that encompasses *'Love them to bits and wait for them to stop'*, but I am not sure where”

“All our students know that they are cared about by the adults around them”

“Staff who truly care and value the individuality of our students”

#### **6.3.10.1 *'I became family there'***

The question of how the young people who attend alternative provision perceive the relational approach outlined above has already been seen in part through Sam and Carl's articulations of the difference between mainstream and alternative provision considered above. As already noted the theme of relationships was highly dominant in all the data collected in this research. As well as talking about a different kind of relationship within alternative provision young adults also talked about being encouraged by staff both in their work and in relation to their future. It is important to understand the level of agreement about the kind of relationships found in alternative provision as articulated by the young adults. This is illustrated by the following quotes:

“we had an amazing time, I became family there, if you know what I mean” (Dean);

“it was smaller it was more of a family sort of environment that you was in” (Charlotte);

“I felt, it was home, I felt homely, basically” (Josh);

“I kind of felt like they were a second mum to me kind of thing cos you



were really looked after” (Kim);

“we got introduced to all the staff members there who were really friendly, who were nicest people I’ve ever met in my life, I still, I’m still in contact with them now, still go and see them and everything” (Carl);

“you knew that everyone was friendly” (Ed)

“outside school the relationships with the teachers was better” (Paul)

In Jeremy’s account below, depth of relationships, in time, also extended to other students at the centre:

“In a way being around the people, er to begin with you’re thinking, you’re just a knob get, keep away from me pretty much but afterwards like, you’re in there for a couple of weeks or so, you’re getting to know these people and underneath like, they’re not that bad” (Jeremy)

Young adults also made connections between the depth of relationships described above and learning, awareness of support and the successful integration of new arrivals into daily life in the centre. That alternative provision had a ‘more friendly atmosphere’ was considered to impact upon learning:

“it wasn’t forced down you” (Sam)

And

“she made us all feel relaxed, I was more willing to think, okay, I’m going to listen” (Kim)

For staff this meant negotiating the formal and informal:

“I enjoyed it there cos they’re not teachers as such they’re more like, friends, and then yeah, but they are still teaching you stuff without making it this disciplined” (Phil)

And

“Tom and Gareth, yes they were obviously the main tutors and yes they had the higher authority of it, they weren’t, they never seemed.. Obviously if someone wasn’t doing what they were supposed to be doing then yes they would take point and pull them up on it, but they were more like one of the students, if you know what I mean, they were more of a friend, or seemed to be more of a friend than anything else” (Josh)

Staff develop good relationships with young people which puts them in a position to enable learning to take place without the need for formal coercion. As recognised above, encouragement and humour are the tools of the teacher in alternative provision. We could consider these to be less obvious forms of coercion, but in the young adults’ accounts we can see something important about developing good relationships when learning:

“I think places like the Bowden centre are needed one hundred per cent. Without a doubt, I think *some people just work better in groups like that where they can connect with each other and get.. actually feel like you know the teachers*” (Sam)

For other young adults the good relationships with staff helped with confidence in building relationships (this will be covered later in the types of experience model) and also with feelings of security:

“it’s more of a safer atmosphere there ... it’s okay no matter what happens, they’re still going to be there to support you” (Charlotte)

That there were good relationships in place could also mean that new pupils were encouraged to engage in these terms:

“it was nice, it was really really relaxed and the teachers were really really like open, and I think a lot, because the people that was already there had a lot of respect for the teachers it kind of, when you was new you wasn’t really disrespectful to them because everybody had a really good relationship with them” (Nadia)

The above quote illuminates how the ability and willingness to develop relationships is a type of capital at work in alternative provision settings.

#### **6.3.10.2 ‘they changed my life really’**

As well as describing relationships with staff as homely, friendly and like family young adults also recalled relationships that were particularly encouraging. Young adults had experienced staff who were not under time pressures, who were willing to explain and encourage students when they were struggling to understand something:

“I think it’s just the way they act, like the way they talk to you and the way that they are there to help you ... they’re not in a hurry to get away from you” (Sam)

This reminds us of Liz’s account earlier in which she described feeling like an inconvenience in mainstream schooling but that it was different in alternative provision. Encouragement also came in the form of interest in a young person’s work:

“my art teacher ... I remember, my GCSE art project thing was a bit, well strange, [laughs] but, um, I made like a huge eye ball, and the interest that she showed in me doing it, was sort of like a, it was good” (Jenny)

Relationships are at the heart of both formal and informal aspects of learning, for Josh who had previously experienced bullying:

“talking to people and just being with people helped quite a lot”

It is this more informal kind of learning about expanding a young person’s horizons, emancipatory learning if you will, which is the final way we will consider young adult’s accounts of relationships in alternative provision schooling. Young adults often connected this kind of learning experience to knowing that the staff in alternative provision cared:

“they cared, they weren’t just teachers ... they were, what’s the problem, what’s getting to you, how can we help. That’s what happened, and they just helped” (Carl)

When asked how he knew that the staff cared Carl responded:

“You knew, you know when you, you know when you just know they care, you can tell when people don’t care, it’s the negligence you can feel it, but they cared, more than anyone in my life ever has. And they still do now”

Josh also had the experience of being encouraged to take positive steps in life:

“Tom and Gareth were awesome ... Great guys, really, they changed my

life really. They're the ones that said you need to do it"

This care and encouragement was also experienced by Emily and considering that she also recalled personal difficulty in taking on positive comments it is all the more poignant that she was able to take this on board:

"I mean everyone, a lot of people that were there cared, they just really wanted you to get, you know to go somewhere and to do something. So it was nice to have that feeling that, you know, that other people did believe in you. Not a pressure, not an expectation just a, you know, it was nice"

#### **6.3.11 'the priority'**

We now turn to **success**, the second theme of educational culture. In mainstream schooling success is individual academic achievement and is aligned to levels and qualifications (see Duckett et al., 2010, Gazeley, 2010, also Broadfoot and Black, 2004 and Reay and Wiliam, 1999 for effects of this). When considering the whole school, success is the amalgamation of individual academic achievement into school level statistics to be monitored by Ofsted and compared in league tables (Gazeley, 2010). Tony (Mainstream head) talked of issues around a full range of qualifications for pupils when using alternative provision schooling:

"the priority is, as with all these children for us, is to ensure all children get English and maths GCSE, that's really difficult because the quality of the provision, alternative provisions often means they don't have access to English and maths GCSE teachers"

It is instructive that for Tony the primary priority when using alternative provision schooling was access to English and maths qualifications. To be fair, alongside this focus he also talked of progression, of making sure pupils had

something to move on to whether it was college or an apprenticeship. He connected this focus to the raising of the participation age and the requirement to report on the destination (NEET status) of his pupils two and three years down the line. But as shown in the literature review, the reporting of NEET statistics somewhat misses the mark as the level of youth unemployment is much more dependent on government economic policy than schooling.

#### **6.3.11.1 *'I was meant to be coming back to school...'***

Probably the most accessible measure of a schools success is its Ofsted rating and interestingly this formed part of the accounts of some of the young adults interviewed:

“Ofsted came in, found out the school was doing poorly and they started like investigating. So they had like Her Majesty’s inspectors sitting in all classrooms, now I wasn’t there for that. Err, I was being mentored, social work, Bass-ment and Yardley, but yeah, the school went under special measures, so then that also made me think as well, maybe it weren’t me, you know what I mean, maybe it was the school, but I’m not going to blame the school ... As far as the school was concerned, I think I was just another relief that I was off their hands” (Dean)

And

“All in all I was at Easton for around a year and a half, there was one week where I wasn’t at school or at a PRU, I think this was so it wasn’t on record but it was possibly Ofsted visiting the school” (Lucy)

#### **6.3.12 *'they get their results by the people'***

Josh mentioned Ofsted in relation to his experience of alternative provision:

“For me it’s not all about, schools about numbers in my eyes, same with college, I’m having this argument in college at the moment, it’s all about

numbers, they want you to pass, pass rates, very important, Ofsted reports, very important. The Bass-ment, yes Ofsted's important to them but they are more for the people they're not more for the results. But obviously they get their results by people, hopefully"

We can once more see the priority of relationship permeating throughout alternative provision schooling, and in Josh's experience, it is in the people with whom they work that alternative providers see their success.

This difference in priorities is supported by evidence from providers. 'The ability to listen to other views' was selected by 15 of 26 respondents. 'Skills for work' and 'Work ethic' came in second and third with eleven and ten responses each. 'An interest in learning' and 'To be a good citizen' were both selected eight times.

The priority given to being able to listen to others' views shows the highly social nature of the learning that happens in alternative provision. The emphasis given to work skills and ethic highlights the future orientation of many providers, as opposed to seeing alternative provision as a route towards becoming NEET. When developing the survey one of the heads interviewed reflected that for them it came down to a wanting to instil aspiration:

"It's the one thing you can't teach isn't it, aspiration... let alone hope... its having that confidence to do what you can do. I'm a firm believer that everyone can do something really well, at least one thing really well and it's just identifying that.. and the hardest thing in the world is to be happy... to be content... it's a combination of factors isn't it, and a GCSE's not going to help you be happy and content. But finding yourself is ... It's that social skills thing really isn't it"

Wanting to instil some sort of aspiration is connected here to building the ability of students to go on to be happy in life. When discussing qualifications Rich saw them pragmatically, as a part of the way to put plans in place for to students to be able to move on:

“I’ve put they can achieve qualifications, they can sort of get a plan for what they’re going to do after school, even if it’s not ... it’s not setting them on fire but at least it’s... way to move on”

The data suggests, therefore, that there is a far broader understanding of success in alternative provision with providers in high agreement that there was consensus amongst their staff that learning is much greater than that which takes place in lessons. When considering what success looks like for students moving beyond alternative provision all providers have an emphasis upon progression, agreeing with the importance of routes beyond the current provision. When asked how their provision helps students as they move beyond compulsory education responses coalesced around four themes. Thirteen responses referenced the ability to choose well and the development of self-belief or future orientation, eight responded in terms of developing skills relevant to the world of work, seven referred to post-16 support / provision and five mentioned qualifications. Two quotes help illustrate this:

“We also show them our "human side" and have time in the day to engage in conversation. We can share our views, ideas and opinions while hearing of theirs too. Gareth and I will often engage in banter/humour”

And

“Hopefully, many have *internalised* the capacity to make positive decisions and go on to do this without thinking. Many with an offending



background have stopped offending”

Once more we see internalisation and the importance of relational learning, both in terms of engaging with staff but also in learning to interact positively with others. When discussing the role of alternative provision schooling, Tony (secondary head) saw the opportunity for a pupil to experience success as an important part of the picture:

“when we use the alternative provisions a child has success in something. Some of these things, they go fishing, some of these things they do a sport related activity, they get qualifications in sports leadership. So where a child can gain success and feel more confident, that is where you’re able to then build on that success and move them into that, okay now let’s look at the academic side of things for you, um, and mostly we find we have to look for opportunities with a child, what is it that, what pushes their buttons to engage with them”

Similarly, Sam’s experience of alternative provision was of staff connecting in to his future (and present!) career ambitions:

“I think I sort of had a feeling what I wanted to do anyway, cos I mean I was doing building work while I was in school anyway. But it’s good to have someone that you can sometimes talk to and say, yeah, no, and then they put their side across as well ...

[Interviewer: like saying, you want to do that, what about beyond that?]

Or they might say well, alright yeah maybe that but I think you might be suited more to this, what do you think about that and stuff like that. Not just say yeah that’s it, we’ll do that, give you maybe other ideas into what

they think you might be suited to better as well”

As well as conceptualising success as connecting into and facilitating the career ambitions of students at alternative provision there was also a process of challenge. This is important in terms of successful alternative provision practice and will be discussed and conceptualised as ‘expanding horizons’ below.

#### **6.3.13 ‘I’ve heard about you’**

The third theme of educational culture is the **understanding of acting out behaviour**. Within mainstream schooling the experienced and reported approach was of labelling pupils as difficult and disruptive. Jeremy was diagnosed with special educational needs whilst at alternative provision. Before this at mainstream:

“they were just like no whatever you’re just a bad kid like we get loads of them through here”

Phil also discussed the effect of being labelled as disruptive:

“if something’s going wrong in the classroom I’m going to point at you because you’re the usual one that does it. That’s happened to me quite a lot, where teachers just blamed me because I was the usual suspect even though I hadn’t done anything that particular time”

Phil’s experience is backed up by McCluskey’s research (2008) which showed the majority of ‘included’ young people (those perceived by teachers as not presenting problems) to be disrupted but also involved in disruption. This finding shows that pupils labelled as difficult may well end up taking more than their fair share of the blame for classroom disruption. Other pupils had the experience of moving to a new school but still experiencing the effect of previous situations:

“In year nine I went to Hampton. This was meant to be a fresh start for me but all the teachers kept saying things like ‘I’ve heard about you...’”  
(Lucy)

And

“there was lots of other children that was worse behaved than me but because they’d been there from year seven they didn’t get kicked out of school. Like they’d had, the school invested more in them, because I’d only been there for a year I feel that they kind of gave up on me before they could really get to know me” (Nadia)

It is interesting that Nadia perceived the school’s level of investment in a pupil as an element in their interpretation of her behaviour. This corresponds to Brodie’s (1999) finding that schools can find it easier to exclude a young person whom they are not invested in and to a wider body of literature which highlights the power of labelling in schools (for example, Briggs, 2010, Gillborn, 1988 and Youdell, 2003).

#### **6.3.14 ‘they would get to the root of the problem’**

Experiences in alternative provision contrasted with this. Charlotte commented:

“I guess that’s what the pupil referral units do, they try and get to the bottom of everything and the other provisions as well, they will try to get to the bottom of the reasons and then help them address them ... in a high school they would get to the matter and then they would pass it on to social services or someone. Whereas in a pupil referral unit or different provision I feel that they would get to the root of the problem and then they would be there to support them through every stage of the process. Whereas it’s not like that because of.. high school’s so much more indifferent”

In alternative provision there is an inherent assumption of a root cause to difficult behaviour. Monica, who works in a sixteen plus provision but who also has experience within mainstream schooling, went as far as to question the notion of behavioural issues:

“I don’t really think there is such a thing as behavioural issues it’s more to do with, the way that they react to a situation I truly believe comes from something that’s happened to them previously or an experience. So when you say, oh that person’s being naughty, I don’t think they’re being naughty I think that they’re, there’s something that’s made them react in that way that we don’t necessarily know about it, so I always say let’s find out from the core what their problem is, where do they need help”

Getting to the heart of the matter and dealing with underlying issues also came through when providers referenced Maslow’s ‘Hierarchy of Needs’ as one of the theoretical models upon which they drew in their work.

#### **6.3.15 ‘they can get quite annoyed’**

**Teaching approach** is the fourth theme of educational culture. Young adults perceived the teaching approach in mainstream provision as impatient and focussed on conveying knowledge (see also Miller et al., 2002 and Gazeley, 2010). Once more connections were made between the limits imposed by the structure of the school and the practice undertaken therein:

“I guess cos there’s so many of the students they don’t really know, well they don’t really care what’s going on with them, they just want to teach a lesson and, and that’s it.. Cos I think I did say to my form tutor about what was actually going on but she said I’ll speak to them and that was it, that was the end of it and they carried on” (Jenny)

Jenny's connected her experience of bullying not being dealt with to a lack of care, somewhat dictated by the scale of mainstream. Aligned to this she perceived that teachers just wanted to teach their lessons and did not see their role as any broader than this. This perception of teachers as wanting to get on with teaching their subject is corroborated by Liz who relayed her experience of when she had struggled with topics:

"if you don't really understand something, the teachers, they sort of almost seem to be a little bit annoyed with you, like cos [indistinct] put in so much time and effort and if you still don't understand something after a million times of being explained, um, yeah, they can get quite annoyed"

As well as the perception of frustration when pupils struggle with what is being taught, teachers had also been experienced as uninspired by what they were teaching. Sam connected this to repetition:

"Sometimes the teachers you can tell, the teachers not even interested, when you're in mainstream school they just don't seem.. They seem like, oh I've done this lesson twice already today, they just don't look like they want to be there some of them. Looks like, aah I don't really want to be teaching this myself. Maybe if they, I dunno improvised or something in the lesson I don't know.. They might enjoy it more and then the people that they're teaching might enjoy it more"

For Sam a positive response to repetition would be to explore different teaching styles and approaches. This is something that was reported in alternative provision schooling by young adults and is considered below. The most extreme contrast between mainstream and alternative provision was made by Jeremy who framed the difference between the two in terms of care:

“Cos it’s a laid back environment, erm, it’s like, your teachers actually care about you, um, in mainstream school they’re there because it’s a job, in PLH they’re there because it’s a career, it’s what, it’s help, they’re doing, like they’re helping out these kids and that so yeah. I mean like when I was in school the teachers honestly didn’t give a shit about you, one teacher threatened to hit me, [laughs] I was just like okay, they honestly just don’t care” (Jeremy)

Although Jeremy’s perceived experience of being threatened was unique among the young adult’s accounts, others also spoke of being marginalised within the mainstream setting, not altogether unsurprising given that all interviewees had ended up outside of the mainstream schooling system.

#### **6.3.16 ‘I never once felt trapped’**

In contrast, the teaching approach in alternative provision schooling was reported and experienced as caring, supportive and indirect. For young adults a number of themes came through which related to the teaching approach within alternative provision. The first of these was patience, relationship and care:

“they just never stopped encouraging you or explaining things to you no matter how many times you needed it” (Liz)

And

“they never shouted at us, they just took us to one side and said you know, look you need to concentrate on what you’re doing and that. You could tell from the way they were with us, they really wanted nothing but the best for us” (Kim)

A lot of what is described in the above would not be possible in a bigger setting with strict timetabling.

Paul described the teaching in alternative provision schooling as better but the work in school as more relevant. This was not something other young adults perceived and perhaps relates to his particularly unsettled experience. In total, after being permanently excluded from mainstream in year nine Paul attended six alternative provision schools.

In the young adults' accounts there were many references to different teaching styles, a greater number of opportunities to take part in active learning experiences were frequently mentioned and one young adult discussed the importance of non-academic lessons:

"I've seen a lot of people benefit a lot more from the design technology the arts and the music, the different non-academic lessons ... on a one to one level you can see their dreams and aspirations for the future so they can know what sort of path to lead them into and what sort of lessons they would like ... so although they don't have English, Maths and Science, they've still got the experience of having different lessons that will facilitate them in the future. So I think it's more based around the person ... when you're in a different provision it's about where you can go, it's not about your GCSE results it's about where you're going and how you get there" (Charlotte)

Charlotte's account relates to what we have considered regarding success both in mainstream and alternative provision schooling. Even though Charlotte is quite brash about not completing English, maths and science and about GCSE results, we have seen that there is not a lack of opportunity or expectation. When generalising across alternative providers; thirteen out of twenty three providers required students to learn at least English and maths, twenty one provided opportunity to learn English and maths and fifteen out of twenty six

offer GCSEs. Teachers in alternative provision were also described as differentiating work very well, tailoring work to pupil's interests and making learning more applicable than had been the case in mainstream:

“The teaching, I really really enjoyed it, they always seemed just to be able to make it more applicable to, I don't know how to explain it, like, you know sometimes when you're at school and it's like a set curriculum and regardless of your ability you have to learn something in a particular way, um, it was slightly different in that, I don't know, they sort of tailored everything for you but um, like if you were more capable of doing something they'd help you sort of achieve what you needed to, um, at the same time they wouldn't make you feel stupid if you couldn't do something” (Liz)

As well as tailoring work to pupils interests within alternative provision there was also the time to get interested in things that were being studied:

“in high school you used to do like your English for an hour and then maths for an hour ... when you done it in Church End you'd have art all day Wednesday, and then on Thursday you know you'd have English lit in the afternoon ... It actually gave you a chance to get interested, like with the English lit and on Tuesdays after.. or Thursday afternoon if you only done that for an hour it would, I, I would have found it difficult to, I don't know, maybe understand, and then sort of take it in and then because we spent so long on it in the afternoon it was easier for me” (Jenny)

The notion of indirect learning mentioned above by providers was also referred to by Josh:

“They did the English and maths, but because it was, how it was



structured, they structured it so people didn't realise they were learning English and maths or whatever"

Linked to this, and an important theme of alternative provision in general but also of teaching approaches was personalisation. This sometimes came in the form of differentiation:

"if I was struggling with something they'd be able to answer straight away and I wasn't getting bored. And they'd adapt the work to like my level which was really good" (Nadia)

Most frequently personalisation revolved around staff developing an understanding of what pupils were interested in:

"They work very gradually and build up over time, they picked on what I wanted to do, what I was interested in. It was about individual care" (Lucy);

"they allowed freedom there, they said okay, what you going to do today ... and you could say, I'd like to learn how to scratch or I'd like to learn how to mix on vinyl or on CD. And they'd say okay ... if I didn't understand anything he would go through it, and the freedom of being able to do what you wanted, it felt so good, because you didn't feel trapped, I never, never once I felt trapped" (Carl)

And

"the teachers there sort of grasped quite quickly was they know what certain students like and don't like. So they can try and base the lesson or what they're doing around, ah he's more likely to listen, or she's more

likely to listen if they enjoy it, sort of thing” (Sam)

Sam says that knowing what a student likes facilitates learning. Similarly Jeremy mentions staff taking the time to learn how a pupil learns so as to elicit positive engagement from them:

“They, they like monitor you for say a couple of weeks and learn how you learn and they’ll, they’ll teach you in a way that’s, you’re going to actually learn, so like there’s no point in them putting a bit of paper in front of you and saying do that if you’re not going to learn anything from it, you’re just going to sit there and be like fuck off why am I going to do that”

Young adults also referred to the importance of having the reasoning behind learning certain topics explained to them:

“You can lead a horse to water but you can’t make it drink, you gotta make me see from my own point of view why this bit of work, this bit of paper and all this writing on it is going to help me get a job rather than telling me it’s going to do it. Cos then I want to do it myself if I see what it’s going to do” (Phil)

#### **6.3.16.1 ‘they pushed everything forwards’**

In describing the teaching approach within alternative provision the final topic mentioned was structure and flexibility. Emily and Carl mentioned that for them structure was helpful:

“it was really good, because it was structured lessons” (Emily)

And

“they were really good, the second you went there they said, okay this is the course, this is what you’re going to be doing, you will be doing, you will be learning about these subjects, and whilst you’re doing these subjects in music you will also be working towards these qualifications”  
(Carl)

This can be aligned to what providers said about the need to be a safe place for students (all but two strongly agreed) where they know who is in charge (all in agreement, nineteen strongly). It is important that there is structure and boundaries within alternative provision schooling. However it is equally important that there is also flexibility and astute negotiation of the tension between the two.

#### **6.3.17 ‘there is no freedom’**

The penultimate theme of educational culture is **curriculum**. We have already seen in some of the quotes above that the curriculum within mainstream school can be rather inflexible and tied to timetabled sessions. We have also seen an awareness of the potential for a broader curriculum to engage students on the periphery of mainstream education in Tony’s examples of his practice as a mainstream head but also of the difficulties, largely financial. This for Tony meant that although he had a construction provision on site it was oversubscribed. Similarly in James’ account of being in mainstream school he wanted to choose particular options that he was interested in. However:

“they had motor vehicles, film studies, they had quite a lot in there ... They got bricklaying, erm, you got gardening, they do [indistinct] different courses, office admin which made no sense obviously in a school, they wouldn’t let me go on any of them ... cos apparently the spaces were full up, so

[Interviewer: So, the only option that you were given was]

Was Media, Geography, Food Tec and Art, which I didn't like art, couldn't stand it" (James)

We cannot know whether a vocational course in mainstream would have engaged James more effectively. It is however clear that, although there are some moves towards a broader conception of curriculum within mainstream schooling there is more to be done. This limited capacity when it comes to vocational options relates back to an earlier quote from Kim who wanted to learn about child care. In mainstream schools pupils choose their options going into year ten but we have seen that these are often constrained by wider circumstances. The other way in which curriculum as a part of wider educational culture was framed in some young adult's accounts involved the perception, at least in part, of what was learnt in school as irrelevant (also Thomson and Russell, 2009). This is somewhat similar to what Jenny says above about English and maths in mainstream being taught in set blocks of around an hour which can make significant learning difficult. Carl compares this restrictiveness within mainstream to the freedom of choice he found in alternative provision:

"I mean, the way I always saw school, it was always, this is what you are doing. There is no freedom. You're doing English at this hour on this day, you doing maths on this, I hated maths, you doing maths, even though I'm doing all, even though I'm doing all pattern recognition now which is all maths related stuff and picking out numbers and learning patterns, um, I hated maths, um, but I think, because The Bass-ment they gave me the opportunity to do.. pursue what I wanted to do.. School never interested me because it was nothing I was interested in"

It is interesting that for Carl he is willing to practice 'maths related stuff' in his job, a subject he hated in school. This seems to connect to the choice he

referred to in alternative provision because the requirement to complete certain tasks in work and within mainstream school is similar and thus the reason for his hatred of maths dissipating is likely something to do with choosing to work in his current role. Other young adults' accounts tended to focus on a perceived irrelevance of what was learnt in school:

"I always thought to myself what.. I'm not gaining anything out of this, I'm not going to use.. half the stuff I learnt in school I thought, I'm not going to do this when I'm older and out me looking for a job, I'm not going to be doing any of this sort of stuff. So, really for me if I didn't think it was going to help me then I didn't really want to do it" (Sam)

Here Sam is specific about his need to be able to perceive the relevance of learning for him to engage. Others were more cynical about whether what they learnt in school was useful:

"they teach you maths, science, which to be honest not many people use" (Phil)

And

"I didn't even know how to turn the bloody iron on until last week ... they don't teach what you need to know in school and it's.. they just sit there wasting their time, it's just about their statistics, it's all they're interested in, they're not interested in the young people" (James)

James above grew up in care which itself presents a whole raft of other challenges around informal learning experiences which schooling alone cannot be expected to address. However we once more see the perceived irrelevance of the school curriculum, here coupled with the dominance of statistics and a

lack of experienced care. Below is a quote from John who begins to explore the potential for the mainstream curriculum to be relevant for some but not others:

“half of the stuff that school teaches you, apart from the basics like reading and writing, you never use again to be fair. Unless you go into stuff like graphics design or something that does involve like algebra and all of the proper high end thought processing stuff ... I suppose it depends on what you want to do, like I said if you want to go into the high end really thought processing stuff then yeah, school is good for you, but then, I know it sounds horrible, if you want to go to something like bricklaying where all you need to know, I know it sounds horrible, is basic numbers, reading and writing because all you need to know is how long a brick is, how thick it is and how long you need to build the wall, do you really need, when are you ever going to say like 5a for a brick, if you see what I mean, like maybe keep it simpler depending what they want to do”

It is of course the case that programmes of study are tailored to ability level within mainstream schooling. What is seen coming through in the above narrative is the hegemony of academic learning within the schooling system to the detriment of other kinds of learning. It is very difficult to break free from this so often internalised structure of the value of different types of learning but a couple of young adult's accounts begin to set off in this direction:

“I'd rather have the ability to get by and develop from that in general life rather than get taught all of it at one short stage, I'd rather learn it all gradually as I go on” (Phil)

Phil seems to be thinking of some sort of life-long learning and Ollie below contrasts his experience of focussing in on a particular topic within an alternative

provision setting to the overwhelming experience of learning within mainstream school:

“I felt like I was learning something compared to in school. Cos back in school we were just learning all sorts really and just gathering so much information, putting it into your head, by the end of the week you’d forget it”

#### **6.3.18 ‘they got me doing what I wanted to do’**

In contrast to this, the curriculum within alternative provision was flexible, perceived as relevant and often involved choice and personalisation. Providers reported frequent opportunities for students to shape and influence their learning. Although this was not always true for every provider there is clearly often the potential for students in alternative provision to have input into what they learn on an on-going basis. When it comes to the slightly narrower question of whether there is opportunity to input into topics within particular subjects there is less agreement. With regards to the planning of topics to be studied within a particular subject there is still broad agreement with the notion of students being able to input. Less strong agreement here is likely reflective of provider’s awareness that when it comes to some subjects there will be required topics and it will thus not always be possible to accommodate student preferences. The ability for a student to choose the subjects or activities they take part in is commonplace with ten of 25 provider respondents saying this was always the case and the other fifteen saying it was sometimes the case. When asked whether as far as possible students should be supported in working on subjects and topics that interest them there was a high level of agreement, in fact a stronger skew towards strong agreement than when providers were asked about ability to choose and input referred to above. This shows that as far as is possible if a student is interested in a topic or subject this will be supported and developed in an alternative provision schooling environment. For eight of twenty three respondents the flexibility of the curriculum extends to there being

no required subjects.

Young adults' experiences of the curriculum within alternative provision were framed in terms of choice, personalisation and relevance. We have already seen above that for Carl the ability to choose was connected to feeling free and therefore to engaging positively with work. Many others referred to choice too. This related to the kind of provision to attend and what to learn. Dean's experience was of attending two alternative providers part time to make up a full time placement overall, one focussed on general education and another specialised in music. Talking about other students at the general educational provision he said:

"we went to Yardley but then one went and done brick laying, the other girl went and done hair and beauty and then me and the other guy would go Bass-ment. That's because that's what we wanted to do. So everyone else at Bass-ment, that's what they want to do, so we're surrounded by people that have already, you know, got these talents and energy for that so it works. Regardless how we are in another environment, i.e. school or wherever, in that environment we work, we work well"

We see again that matching up an individual's interests to the subjects they are learning about can be highly motivating. It can also be possible for students to move between one provision and another when they express a particular interest:

"I had four days at the Fresh Training and had like one day at PLH and I asked if I could have like all days at PLH and then gradually I did have more day's at PLH" (Phil)

Beyond choosing which alternative provision school to attend young adults also



recounted numerous instances of choosing and influencing what to learn. Jeremy referred to a specific lesson at alternative provision in which he was able to choose what to learn about when showing the researcher a folder of the work he had completed while at the school:

“in ‘you choose’ because it was like we choose the activities that we wanted to do ... doing that bit and soldering all that was part of you choose, because I choose, I wanted to do that”

Here we once again see motivation connecting to autonomy, choosing and wanting to do a particular piece of work. At the special school in which Lucy was eventually placed she was supported into an additional placement learning accountancy at a local college. In describing this she again makes this connection between choice and motivation:

“This was my choice, they got me doing what I wanted to do to motivate me. I learnt all kinds of skills there, attitudes, and views, got GCSEs, was prepared for the real world... I left St Mary’s with 5 A to C grade GCSEs and level 2 accountancy” (Lucy)

The final way in which curriculum was framed by young adults was in terms of relevance. This related to learning skills needed in the workplace and adult life and also to the arrangement of work experience. Being taught about banking, interviews and CVs were mentioned by Phil and Carl told of doing a presentation to two adults he didn’t know (they both worked in an area related to alternative provision) in preparation for going to an interview for an apprenticeship:

“towards the end of being at the Bass-ment, before I went to Pelling, they had me do a presentation in front of two or three people ... one of them was in their mid-forties, one of them was in their mid-fifties, so

presenting what I was doing to them was really difficult, it was how to create music, and then I had to teach them how to make music so it was a presentation and then it was hands on, and, it was, only lasted about an hour, but that was nerve racking but they said, you just did it normally. So, yeah, they, if not, they made me a better person”

For Carl the experience mentioned above developed his self-belief. Similarly for Charlotte having work experience in place whilst at alternative provision was an important part of keeping her focussed on the future:

“when I was there [the work experience placement] it was like I could see myself being there full time and it gave me the drive to want to carry on”

#### **6.3.19 ‘I kind of felt education failed me’**

The final theme of educational culture is **personalisation**. When considering the organisational constraint of scale above it was discussed how there was limited ability for teachers within mainstream settings to see pupils as individuals and how young adults perceived themselves to have been known only as a part of a class. When considering situations where a young person has been singled out due to difficult behaviour the situation is unfortunately not much better. A number of young adults referred to experiences of labelling which were quoted above. This is essentially a form of personalisation but more accurately depersonalisation, a caricature of the young person. This is essentially what was found more broadly in young adults experiences of mainstream schooling – depersonalisation. Charlotte experienced moving from out of town and applying to new schools only to be refused entry. Her reflections relating to this were to do with the school relying on notes and statistics rather than getting to know the young person they were considering:

“I feel like, because obviously they didn’t try with me, if they got to know me, they would know that academically I was all there and I was ready to

learn and I would have stayed in the classroom ... I felt if they would have actually given me a chance to get to know me instead of what they had written on a piece of paper then they would have known that it was different. Whereas New Springs was just like, I felt that they were just like um, it's going to be too much disruption and they don't have the time and effort to try and deal with someone like that so then they would send them to the PRU"

Although the form of Josh's acting out was school refusal and therefore different to the behavioural difficulties Charlotte had presented he similarly felt his situation should have been considered in more detail:

"I kind of felt, education failed me you know what I mean ... It would be nice if they actually looked in to it more and said well actually hold on, what, who is stopping this child going to school"

This leads back to the notion developed earlier of a frequent lack of meaningful relationships in mainstream school often connected to the systemic constraints placed upon those working within the system of mainstream schooling but arguably embodied in these individuals as well.

#### **6.3.20 'they all had their little chats'**

In relation to alternative provision we have already covered how personalisation has many dimensions, including educational, relational and behavioural. When asked about how to improve practice in alternative provision Liz said:

"I wouldn't necessarily like say something they could do better but to continue sort of individualising the curriculum to students, but, cos that was always a really great thing"

So for Liz one of the best things about alternative provision was the

personalisation. For Lucy, her interests were built upon successfully at the special school but at an earlier provision the problem as she saw it was about lack of personalisation:

“There wasn’t much individualisation at Church End, all the pupils were similar but they had different academic needs and these weren’t catered for”

At St Mary’s Lucy’s experience of personalisation was connected to being known and understood by staff:

“St Mary’s spent more time trying to find out what they needed to do, they scoured through paperwork, did their own assessments, they put time and effort into finding out about the individual”

This was also something Sam referred to. Thus personalisation does not just have educational dimensions but relational and behavioural dimensions too:

“They all had their little chats sort of thing, find out what I liked what got me annoyed and sort of things like that. I think they obviously just must have relayed back to everyone else and said well, if you think he’s starting to get annoyed maybe change it a bit”

#### **6.3.21 ‘It sort of changed my way of thinking’**

The final category used to contrast mainstream and alternative provision schooling is outcomes. For mainstream schools this is almost entirely framed in terms of qualifications. There was nuance to be found in the mainstream secondary head’s account included in this research. He referred to wanting to see pupils leave with a ‘full range’ of qualifications and being keen to see pupils on the periphery receiving sufficient English and maths teaching to reach their

potential but was also concerned with life beyond mainstream schooling. It is appropriate to recognise that for those who were struggling to access the mainstream environment his starting point was to discuss what their aspirations were in terms of employment and to work back from there. This is clearly good practice but it did only seem to be in place for those on the periphery.

Within alternative provision fifteen of the twenty six providers offered GCSE's. Beyond this numerous other qualifications were available as detailed above. We can surmise that qualifications are an important part of the outcomes seen within alternative provision schooling. However there is much more to be said. Providers were asked to talk about their priorities in relation to the things students learn in alternative provision which are not on the timetable. Discussed in detail above in relation to the theme of success within educational culture, their priorities were predominantly about social learning or getting on with others and future orientation – being ready to move on. Providers were also asked about how their provision helped students move into the world of work, again discussed in detail above in relation to success. In addition to the future orientation already mentioned providers also talked in terms of developing self-belief and the ability to choose well. Young adults talked about many outcomes, often framed as changes brought about by attending alternative provision. These were named by Carl, quoted in full above in relation to success, as building communication skills, maturity, focus to go on to doing what they want to do, building relationships, and developing an understanding of life in general. In addition to these, purpose/motivation, a calming influence and confidence will also be considered. Building communication skills was mentioned by a number of young adults and was often connected to developing confidence in talking to people:

“I guess the confidence that I got from being outside of school ... helped me to realise that I wasn't incapable of talking to people” (Liz);

“I was really shy, really shy, overly shy. But, yeah, they boosted my confidence more than anything, they taught me how to, how to come out of my shell a bit more” (Carl)

And

“If I didn’t go there then I wouldn’t ... be as confident as I am now, I’m not life of the party or anything but I couldn’t speak to people before so.. I made friends there so it sort of changed my way of thinking” (Jenny)

Phil connected the need to become more sociable to experiences of being out of school:

“just being at PLH and stuff like that in general just made me more of like a, a mingly person, because through school, because I spent so much time at home I wasn’t very like, I’m still not very ... I’m not very sociable still but I’ve got a lot better since school”

Lucy realised how she was more in control of her behaviour than those around her. She ended up attending a special school. This led to maturity in taking responsibility and making good choices:

“If I kicked off it had a domino effect because they don’t know what else to do, they don’t understand, but I do... I thought fuck, if I kick off it will set him off, I can walk off and calm down but he can’t. I need to control my behaviour because they can’t and it was dangerous and significant behaviour. I was always selfish but their experience hit home. The way I behave is a choice but these people don’t have a choice. I realised I was choosing, not always, there were times when I couldn’t control it but I was in a serious minority. There were around 200 pupils at the school

and only two of us will actually have a job. I realised I had the opportunity to do something, the other pupils want this opportunity but they don't have it, I realised there were people who would kill to be in my situation"

This development of maturity for Lucy impacted on her focus moving forwards. This was also an outcome of attending alternative provision for a number of other young adults:

"they showed so much interest in my future and you know like good things kind of thing, it's pretty much it was thanks to them and their support that I am where I am now, I'm not, you know, sitting on my back side doing nothing all the time" (Kim)

And

"I think if I didn't have The Bass-ment I wouldn't be here now, pretty much, I wouldn't, it a given I wouldn't be here right now. It started me doing a lot of stuff" (Josh)

For John his focus became to leave school with qualifications so as to be able to spur his little brother and sister on in their schooling. His experience of alternative provision came as his dad became disabled:

"basically my whole life was changing. Um, I think that six months really gave me time to adjust and made me reflect on how much of a twat I was earlier on, um, it actually made me realise and go, well I can't be a twat all of my school life, I suppose I better walk out with something"

Emily's experience of alternative provision involved developing good

relationships with teachers at the school. For her, this was what enabled her to start college and return to a more mainstream environment. In attending alternative provision Charlotte developed her understanding of how life progresses:

“going to the pupil referral units I’ve found that there’s more than just one path to get you there and it doesn’t matter which one you get as long as you still get your goal at the end. So, I mean it has been disruptive to my lifestyle that apparent, do you know what I mean but um, I felt at the same time that I haven’t missed out as much.. When you look at it from a whole”

Although attending an alternative provision school had clearly been disruptive to her education she didn’t feel as though she had missed out as she had been able to learn things there that she had not learnt within a mainstream school. Dean and Ed both experienced a level of motivation that had not been present when they were attending mainstream school:

“It gave me a sense of purpose, I had something to get up to and look forward to and do” (Dean)

And

“they made me more motivated, a lot, they made me be like willing to go and do stuff now, cos like beforehand I just, as I said I didn’t want to get out of bed, didn’t want to do nothing, but now I literally, I just want to get out, go find something like, every morning at Optics I used to be there really early ready to do what I wanted to do” (Ed)

For Ed this sense of purpose had continued to influence him post alternative



provision.

A number of young adults shared that for them the influence of alternative provision had been a calming one:

“through school I was quite energetic and like aggressive and then I went through PLH, that calmed me down a bit more and then school, I was more or less the same but I was less aggressive and hyper. And then I went to Bowden which calmed me down a lot more” (Phil)

And

“going to Fresh Training and realising like not all, not all teachers are poo-heads like they were at New Springs (mainstream) made me, not like it more but I learnt to tolerate it really” (John)

Before attending alternative provision John’s school’s list of his misdeeds was, in his words, ‘as long as you like’. He had clearly presented very difficult behaviour at mainstream and in addition was undergoing stressful life events and had undiagnosed dyslexia. For him the break of alternative provision allowed a different mind-set to form which was of significant help when re engaging with mainstream schooling. For Jeremy as a result of the calming influence of alternative provision he became happier and more open to others:

“like when I was at PLH I was a lot less angry, it took a lot more for me to get angry ... it just, it calmed me down, it changed my personality I started laughing, joking around with everyone rather than with just a select few people”

Sam connected learning to take a calmer approach to situations to the way in

which the approach of staff in alternative provision was different to mainstream schooling:

“I think the way they handled us differently to the other schools, it sort of showed you different way, like you could just take a second, instead of just exploding straight away in some [indistinct] or something, take a second, calm down and then answer, or if you really don’t want to you don’t have to stay there and confront it you could just walk away from stuff if you.. you don’t have to stay and fight your corner all the time. You can walk away from it”

Experiencing a different kind of relationship to that which had been present in mainstream schooling allowed for the re-imagining of possibilities, the development of an understanding of some of the options of how to engage in difficult or stressful situations.

The final outcome referred to by young adults was confidence, for Josh this related to encouragement that was perceived to be grounded in reality:

“Confidence. Self-esteem, that’s the word I’m thinking of, they did build self-esteem, by making you feel good about, making you feel good about yourself, for the right reason, obviously not trying to boost you falsely but saying, yes you’re good at this, this is what you should work on”

In addition to successes leading to confidence in learning another aspect of confidence built in alternative provision related to a future orientation of feeling and being prepared for work:

“they built up my confidence a lot, cos I was very, I was very, very shy of confidence and that, they built that up for me, um, they done like

practices where I was like in interviews to help me build up my interview skills” (Ollie)

#### **6.4 Conclusion – leading into second section of findings**

The above is a consideration of the nature of mainstream and alternative provision that has involved comparing and contrasting these two fields of schooling. The field, habitus and capital at play in the two types of school will now be used to develop a model of types of experience of pupils who fall out of the mainstream schooling.

## **7 Findings: types of experiences of pupils who don't fit**

The previous chapter focussed on the nature of alternative provision schooling. Empirical data from this research project was used to develop an analysis of the field of alternative provision schooling, contrasted with an analysis of the field of mainstream schooling. This chapter will use the understanding of these fields to underpin and explain a model of experience types of pupils who fall out of the latter field.

A model of pupil experience types was not an outcome expected at the beginning of the research process and was developed and refined whilst the fieldwork was underway. Before discussing the fully developed model and integrating it with the analysis of the field of mainstream schooling it is worth considering the development of the model.

### **7.1 The development of a model of pupil experience types**

As described earlier, the researcher previously worked in and jointly managed an alternative provision school, and in this context a model of stress and coping (see Chaplain, 2003) proved useful in many of the difficult situations experienced there. It was from this kernel that the model grew. It showed that more happened within experiences of alternative provision than could be explained by a simple model of stress and coping.

As a framework for this, four issues were considered; first, the kind of situations young people who attend alternative provision schools have experienced; second, a consideration of what success might involve in alternative provision; third, the role alternative provision plays; and finally, moving on to life after alternative provision. Using this framework a model of four types of experience of pupils was developed, this included a stress type experience, an SEN type experience, a refusal type experience (with two subtypes), and another that was considered potentially a hybrid of types of experience. At this point the ideas were solely based on the researcher's experience of the field, and needed to be

considered in the light of the empirical data collected from the field work. There seemed to be a fairly natural fit between the idea of a types of experience model and the stories young adults shared about their experiences of schooling. Views collected in this research developed the pupil experience types and led to an initial model of four types of experience. These were: 'stress', consisting of pupils who have experienced difficult life events or trauma; 'bullied', pupils who have experienced bullying at school leading to truancy; 'needs', pupils who have specific learning needs which mainstream cannot address; and 'motivation', pupils who are often focussed on work or growing up and perceive schooling as irrelevant. This model was used in stage three of the research when re-interviewing young adults and interviewing key informants (head of a mainstream school, head of primary provision and head of post-16 provision). To develop a more nuanced model the research data collected in both stage two and three of the research was analysed (see Chapter 4). The finalised model of pupil types of experience will now be discussed. The five experience types are: stress, bullied, SEND (Special Educational Needs or Disability), difficulties with authority and systemic fault.

## **7.2 Connecting the model with the field of mainstream schooling**

The experiences of the young adults interviewed in this research will give colour to each type of experience before a discussion of the process through which marginalisation of disengagement from the field of mainstream education occurs.

The question of using a model of pupil 'types of experience' is not without difficulty and is open to charges of reductionism. The qualitative approach used in the research has helped ensure the model is grounded in the rich and complex stories provided by the young adults regarding their experiences. However, it is important to address the issue of deficit models which locate pupil difficulties within the individual. Using Bourdieu's field theory, which by its very nature connects objectified structure with embodied dispositions, to underpin and

explain the model of pupil experience types takes a step away from pathologising marginalised and excluded students. However, the force exerted by deficit constructions in this area of educational discourse is strong and interpretations of the following model are likely to feel its pull (see Holland et al., 2007). As such it is necessary to state that the following model is not intended to be a tool for early identification of pupils 'at risk' of exclusion from schooling. Rather the model seeks to consider common experiences of pupils who become dislocated from mainstream. The strength of the model is found first in its ability to provide a powerful critique by drawing on an articulation of the avant-garde movement (see Chapter 5) that is alternative provision within the field of schooling as a whole. It is secondly in its connection to successful practice and outcomes in alternative provision (see Chapter 8).

#### **7.2.1 Hybridisation**

The potential for a pupil to have experienced more than one of the common experiences connected to marginalisation and exclusion from schooling is high. Amongst the eighteen young adults interviewed there were three whose experiences could be considered to align to just one pupil experience type. Other young adults' experiences were predominantly aligned to one of the pupil experience types but had other experiences also recognisable in their story. Five of the young adults' experiences connected strongly to two of the pupil experience types, again for some of these there were additional experiences recognisable in their stories.

The fact that it is difficult to pigeonhole pupils' into the types of experience model brings a healthy level of complexity and reaffirms the caution expressed above to avoid using the model as a tool to assess 'at risk' pupils. In the interest of clarity, the discussion below will address each type of experience individually but it is helpful to reflect that in reality hybridisation will often be in play either at the primary (two dominant types of experience) or secondary level (one dominant type of experience but with other experiences recognisable in the

pupils story). For example, it is possible to see how a pupil whose experience of schooling is of a system which does not, without individual support, enable them to learn may also experience bullying because of their difference. Equally, a pupil who has experienced traumatic or stressful life events may also experiencing difficulties in responding in what is considered an appropriate way to those in positions of authority.

It is also important to recognise that pupils who have had experiences which align to the types of experience laid out below can be supported effectively in a mainstream school, and that this will often take place.

As noted in Chapter 2, in 2008/9 pupils who were in care continuously for 12 months or more were just under three times more likely to be excluded than the average pupil. (Figures for this were obtained directly from the DfE through an FOI request.) However this still only represents a minority of the children in care population as a whole – 42,850 were not permanently excluded. Similarly pupils with SEN are significantly more likely to be excluded, but as a proportion of the whole population of pupils with SEN they are again a minority. Thus mainstream schooling can and does work well for many pupils with particular difficult experiences. It is important therefore to recognise the unpredictability of who will end up outside of mainstream schooling and how this will occur. Similarly, once a pupil is out of mainstream it is very hard to know where they will end up in life:

“a good number of these kids, some of them will go on to become offenders they will go on to um, find employment difficult, but a surprising number do actually land on their feet eventually, you know, it’s where they are at a particular point in their lives ... you do get ones who become very successful and others end up doing multiple life sentences, you know it depends on what happens, and from my experience you

could never really predict, cos some children you thought, yeah, they're definitely going to be lifers end up managing the pub, and other children you thought would manage quite well they don't. It's just very difficult to predict" (Kevin, head of primary provision).

The point of predictability is raised to reinforce that the types of experience model is not a tool for early identification of 'at risk' pupils but rather a framework of ideas that needs to be held in its context. The framework provides solid grounding for developing an understanding of what is important in a given situation and what is helpful in working towards a positive outcome for the young person.



Figure 7.1 – Young adults by pupil experience types

Name:	Stress	Bullying	SEND	Difficulties with authority	Systemic fault
Dean	x		x	x	
Jeremy	x		x		
Charlotte				~	x
Liz		x			
Ed	x	x	x		
Paul		~	~	~	?
Kim		x	x		
Nadia	x	~		x	
Lucy			x	x	
Emily	x				
Jenny		x			?
Ollie		x			?
James			x	x	
Phil	x	~		x	
John	x		x	x	
Josh		x			
Carl		x			
Sam				x	

In the table above, x represents present, ~ represents partially present, ? represents perhaps present and highlighting represents dominance.

### 7.3 The model

The final model is outlined in summary format in the table below:

Figure 7.2 – Types of experience table

<b>Type of experience</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Connection to the field of mainstream schooling</b>
<i>Stress</i>	<p>Experience of traumatic or significantly difficult life events which may well persist during their time in alternative provision.</p> <p>Home life can be insecure and unpredictable and some pupils who fit this type of experience have been taken into, and possibly in and out of, the care of the local authority.</p> <p>They may well be in a position to fit into the mainstream system for a proportion of their time in school.</p>	<p>What has happened to disrupt their life simply eclipses the game that is schooling. This leads to irreverence for the game itself, the rules which govern it and the capital at stake in the game.</p> <p>In situations which are stressful but less all-encompassing it may be that a young person starts playing a different game to the one being played in the field of mainstream schooling</p>
<i>Bullied</i>	<p>Will have been bullied at school and will have got to the point of truancy, forging sick notes or school refusal.</p> <p>Some pupils will also have experienced the development of anxiety or depression.</p> <p>The issues of bullying will not have been successfully addressed in the mainstream environment.</p>	<p>What has happened means that there is no space for them within the mainstream school. It not being possible to negotiate a survivable position within their peer group. This leads to school refusal and low attendance; a total disengagement from the game.</p>

<p><i>SEND</i></p>	<p>Specific requirements relating to the way in which they learn which the mainstream environment struggles to meet.</p> <p>It may well be that there is a statement of special educational needs in place, some form of diagnosis, or perhaps an identified specific physical disability. Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, ADHD, ADD, Autism and Aspergers were commonly mentioned by both young adults and providers.</p> <p>What is common to the above is that a pupil labelled as such will need adaptation of the mainstream environment.</p>	<p>Those who experienced a diagnosis of autism, Aspergers or ADHD disregarded or rejected the need to give at least the appearance of inferiority and insignificance. This led to these young adults being labelled as troublemakers leading to marginalisation and exclusion.</p> <p>Experiences related to learning were mentioned by those who had experienced a diagnosis of dyslexia. This led to difficulties in playing the academic achievement game. Beyond this one young adult was targeted by competitors in the form of bullying and the other became disruptive and destructive to avoid playing the game and ended up labelled, marginalised and excluded.</p>
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<i>Difficulties with authority</i>	<p>Will struggle to respond 'appropriately' to teachers in the school environment and will have difficulties with being treated like a child.</p> <p>They may also be focussed on work, growing up or earning money and can therefore struggle to see how mainstream schooling prepares them for what they want to do in life.</p>	<p>All struggled with the notion of embodying inferiority in their relationships with teachers. This came about in a number of ways;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for some stressful experiences led to rejection of the rules of play,</li> <li>• others didn't want to be at school and their rejection of the game led to rejection of its rules,</li> <li>• a final group, including Sam, rejected the embodiment of inferiority outright.</li> </ul>
<i>Systemic fault</i>	<p>An error in the schooling system which need not have occurred and had it not happened they would most probably have maintained a position in the field of mainstream schooling.</p>	<p>Underlying experiences relating to the other pupil experience types but were specifically held back from what may well have been more successful placements because there was not space for their wishes and views to be accommodated.</p>

### 7.3.1 Stress type experiences

Pupils whose experience fits this descriptor will have experienced traumatic or significantly difficult life events which may well persist during their time in alternative provision (see also Ribbens McCarthy and Jessop, 2005). Their home life can be insecure and unpredictable and some pupils who fit this type of experience have been taken into, and possibly in and out of, the care of the local authority. They may well be able to fit into the mainstream system for a proportion of their time in school. However stressors are both unpredictable in occurrence, and a stress experience type pupil's response may be well beyond

what school staff would consider reasonable.

To consider each experience type in detail a case study will be presented, in this instance Emily's story will be used to develop a clearer picture of the stress experience type.

#### **7.3.1.1 Emily's story**

At primary school Emily reported some difficulties; this mostly consisted of being sent home from school in the afternoon for the rest of the day. She recognised that she was quite destructive and connected this to 'family things', "it was mostly about getting my dad's attention". When at secondary school things escalated somewhat and she began to experience week long exclusions and block days out. At the beginning of year eight she was taken into care. This had a profound effect on her: "I think I just gave up with school because I wasn't living with my dad anymore so I just didn't see the point". For Emily, an important situation which arose from being in care was her transportation to and from school by a taxi service. Due to this she no longer felt like her experience was the same as that of her peers: "I didn't feel like I was having a normal school day ... so, I withdrew, I kind of started pulling away from the community". Alongside being taken into care Emily was also placed into alternative provision. This was framed by those who explained it to her as an opportunity to have a 'bit of a breather' and work on things that needed work on. However her experience was that: "it kind of drew me out more". Emily was permanently excluded about a quarter of the way through year 8 and placed into another school full time. This didn't go well: "the professionals made a mistake of putting me straight back into full time mainstream ... that didn't work at all". In years eight and nine she attended two alternative settings and only attended mainstream school one day a week. This situation led towards her full time placement in alternative provision schooling at the end of year nine:

"I remember one of my so called friends turning round to me and saying,

‘well what’s the point in you even being here if you’re only here one day a week?’ and at that point I just flipped and was I like right ... I can’t stay in mainstream, I don’t feel normal anymore”.

In Emily’s story we can see a number of significantly difficult life events which occurred outside of the field of mainstream schooling – her mum is notable by her absence, she experienced a lack of her dad’s attention, and she was taken into care. She did not share whether her foster placement was stable or not. However the experience of being uprooted and placed into a new home environment will have had a profound effect upon how secure home is perceived to be. She likely showed some ability to fit in to mainstream as she was kept there for a day a week alongside alternative provision schooling. The incident that ended her time in mainstream schooling would appear to teachers looking on to be relatively minor, an unkind word spoken by a friend, but for Emily was significant enough to leave mainstream schooling and also to be remembered upon interview years later.

#### ***7.3.1.2 Connecting stress with the field of mainstream schooling***

For Emily, the point at which she could no longer sustain a position within the field of mainstream schooling was when someone she considered a friend asked what the point was of her attending one day a week. She articulated this as no longer ‘feeling normal’. Another point at which she used this language was in relation to being transported to school in a taxi after being taken into care. This crunch point connects to the capital of negotiating with competitors. Emily’s experiences meant she no longer felt in a position to negotiate a survivable, let alone successful, position within the whole school pupil population. This can be understood as Emily no longer playing the game on the same terms as everyone else. This would understandably have an effect on her ability to play for the prize (qualifications) but more importantly significantly limits her ability to negotiate with competitors. Behaviour that did not conform to the rules of the game (appearing to assume inferiority and insignificance) over time moved Emily

into feeling unable to negotiate a position in the game. In her story above, being sent home from primary school for the afternoon was a common occurrence and once taken into care she was also placed into alternative provision 'to work on things'. Both of these highlight that Emily was not playing by the rules of the game. Her reasoning for the former was that it was about getting her dad's attention. Regarding the latter, once she was no longer living with her dad she gave up with school because she no longer saw the point. This contains an element of no longer aiming for the prize but is more consistent with no longer assuming inferiority and insignificance – perhaps even violating the insignificance rule out of a desire to feel significant.

Thus in Emily's experience initially she deliberately violated the rules of the game so as to win her own prize, her dad's attention. Once taken into care she gave up on the game altogether because she did not see the point once her world had been reshaped so significantly. This led to a situation where she was still in part involved in the field of mainstream schooling but only for one day a week. The end of this came with an unkind word from a friend which made her no longer feel normal, this is aligned with no longer feeling able to sustain a survivable position within the whole school pupil population.

Other young adults in the sample also recounted stressful experiences, though played the game rather differently. James, for example, behaved badly, wanting to get excluded because he did not want to be in his school. Others, like Emily, simply gave up on the game. For two young adults this connected to being taken into care, for one this led to a situation where they 'flipped out really bad' after which the school decided to place them into alternative provision. For the other, after being in care she no longer had any respect for her mum, and at school, "I had no respect for teachers or anything like that". For another who experienced significant difficulties at home and ended up living with a friend for a time, "my problems weren't their problems so, and that's what I felt like, I didn't have to

give them any respect, I didn't care".

For those young adults who had experienced severe stress, it seemed that what had happened to disrupt their life simply eclipsed the game that is schooling. This leads to irreverence for the game itself, the rules which govern it and the capital at stake in the game. In situations which are stressful but less all-encompassing it may be that a young person starts playing a different game to the one being played in the field of mainstream schooling – for Emily the prize was getting her dad's attention and for James it was getting kicked out of the school he so disliked. Playing a different, more achievable game can be a way of exerting a level of control over life situations which are otherwise beyond one's influence.

Alternatively, for those who do stay in mainstream, school could become a safe and stable place where their existing relationships take on additional importance.

### **7.3.2 Bullied**

Pupils whose experiences match up to this experience type will have been bullied at school and will have got to the point of truancy, forging sick notes or school refusal. Some pupils will also have experienced the development of anxiety or depression and the issues of bullying will not have been successfully addressed in the mainstream environment. The work of Duckett et al. (2010) suggests bullying may be more prevalent in schools than staff perceive it to be. Although most pupils who experience this disengage, as set out above, some respond by presenting acting out behaviour. To give colour to this pupil experience type Josh's story will be considered below.

#### **7.3.2.1 Josh's story**

Josh experienced bullying throughout his time in middle school and this escalated in years six and seven. This led to him refusing to attend school – "at that point I was refusing to go to school. You didn't want to go somewhere if



you knew you get beaten up”. This resulted in his mum home schooling him between year seven and year nine. His parents were threatened with court action for his non-attendance and the school refusal team became involved in the situation. His parents managed to get him a place at another mainstream school where he should have gone into year ten but it was agreed to hold him back a year and start him in year nine. This went very well but then, in his own words, he had a mental breakdown in year ten due to his previous experiences – “when you’re being bullied you think nah everyone’s out to get you, keep yourself to yourself”. At this point his school did what they could to schedule his week around activities he enjoyed to encourage his attendance. This included work on the school farm, maths, DIY, ‘mechanical bits’ and in addition the school paid for him to attend alternative provision on a Friday. His attendance continued to be sporadic and he stopped attending mainstream school through to the end of year eleven and only attended some of the alternative provision. Josh’s experience of compulsory schooling was not positive, in his interview he reflected that “I kind of felt, education failed me”. However this was not the end of Josh’s story. Around a year later the alternative setting got in touch again and after a false start he completed a course with them and was supported into an electrician course at college. There had been numerous ups and downs along the way but at the time of interview he lived with his partner and their daughter, had a part time job and was completing his electrician training in the form of a diploma through evening classes. He even still performed from time to time using skills he had learnt at the alternative provision.

In Josh’s story his experiences of bullying led to school refusal and were also implicated in many of the subsequent ups and downs. Josh did not feel his earlier school dealt with bullying effectively and even suggested that he experienced bullying by teachers at some points. It is helpful to note, and will be important to keep in mind when discussing successful alternative provision practice in Chapter 8, that Josh’s journey towards what can be considered a

number of successful outcomes was a long one. Even though his experience of upper school was broadly positive he did not engage there and his previous experiences haunted him.

#### ***7.3.2.2 Connecting bullying with the field of mainstream schooling***

It was bullying which led to Josh's initial school refusal and home schooling. Josh's experience of his position in middle school was not survivable and he refused to attend because of this, because he knew he was going to 'get beaten up'. Josh's later success with college and evening courses suggests that for him, playing for the academic achievement prize was not likely to have been a concern. Josh was not listened to or taken seriously, and this perpetuated and further inscribed his negative perceptions of self. Josh's experience of mainstream schooling led to almost total embodiment of insignificance and in turn to his disengagement from the system. It took considerable persistence to help him begin to engage again with education.

This case also illustrates that sometimes a new setting with a very different philosophy is required to support a young person with this type of history. Josh's overriding experience of school was of bullying so that for him there was no survivable position within the whole school pupil population.

Both Carl and Kim had similar experiences of bullying leading to school refusal. Others who also experienced bullying discussed strategies by which they sought to negotiate a survivable position within the school pupil population. For Ollie this involved physical retaliation, which dissipated things temporarily. Similarly to Josh, Ollie's experiences led to a total disengagement from schooling. He said; "I just felt like sitting in the corner and doing nothing". Jenny experienced bullying from a particular individual from primary school into secondary school, yet when this pupil was excluded her friends had come to embody this disposition and continued to bully her. Jenny recounted trying to negotiate a position within her peer group by desperately trying to respond to the

accusations levelled against her. She used to be told that she smelt and in response she used to take an additional four or five shirts into school with her and change during her breaks. Sadly of course this had no effect as the accusations were not grounded in reality. Things only began to change when her mum found out. Somewhat similarly for Liz, change was initiated because she told her mum about the bullying she was experiencing.

Thus in general, for young adults who had experienced events which align to the bullying experience type it seems that what has happened means that there is no space for them within the mainstream school. The fact that it is not possible to negotiate a survivable position within their peer group leads to school refusal and low attendance and a total disengagement from the game.

### **7.3.3 SEND**

A pupil whose experiences align with this experience type will have specific requirements relating to the way in which they learn which the mainstream environment struggles to meet. It may well be that there is a statement of special educational needs in place, such as some form of diagnosis, or an identified specific physical disability. Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, ADHD, ADD, Autism and Aspergers were commonly mentioned by both young adults and providers. A pupil assessed as having such needs will need adaptation of the mainstream environment for their learning to be facilitated. The environment is frequently inflexible. However adaptation is possible in many, if not the vast majority of cases as deduced from the exclusion figures considered above although arguments about whether pupils are thriving or simply surviving their schooling can of course be made. Jeremy's story is a good example of a situation where the mainstream environment has failed to adapt.

#### **7.3.3.1 *Jeremy's story***

Jeremy's experience of primary school was positive. His teachers knew him and how to support him, but when he went to high school difficulties started. At this point he was not diagnosed with any particular difficulties but later went on to

have a statement put in place for autism. At High School he presented very difficult and disruptive behaviour and ended up being excluded. Home tutoring was put in place, but this did not work. About half way through year eight he started attending PLH and a couple of weeks after this they referred him to a local centre to be diagnosed because they thought he had autism. His behaviour at mainstream high school was both reactionary and confrontational. For example; “most of my friends were in years above and that and like people in my year I just didn’t get on with. So they’d say like the wrong thing to me and I’d just completely snap and smack them in the face or something”. Jeremy also addressed what he saw as a lack of reality in what his new headmaster was saying about the school when it became an academy; “I just said it to him how it was and he didn’t like me as soon as I said that”. Bearing in mind how an individual with autism might experience the world it is possible to make sense of Jeremy’s responses. Unfortunately for Jeremy, “at school they were just like no whatever you’re just a bad kid like we get loads of them through here”. Labelling Jeremy as a ‘bad kid’ rather than seeking to understand his experience of the world and help him with navigating it was coupled with work which was not appropriate; “in junior school, he recognised the level I was working at ... and then obviously went to East Bank, I was getting given year seven work and it was just like, I’d finish it within five minutes and then I’d just be sitting there for the rest of the class like, bored”.

Jeremy’s experience of the world meant that the environment of mainstream schooling needed some level of adaptation to be successful. This was both in terms of managing relationships and in learning. It was after Jeremy had been excluded from mainstream schooling and had settled into an alternative provision school that he was diagnosed with autism and a statement was put in place. However, even if Jeremy had been diagnosed with autism rather than labelled as a ‘bad kid’, his experiences would still have presented a challenge for the mainstream environment.

#### ***7.3.3.2 Connecting needs with the field of mainstream schooling***

Jeremy's experience of primary schooling was relatively stable because staff knew and understood him. When he got to secondary school he was labelled as a 'bad kid' and he presented reactionary and confrontational behaviour. He ended up being excluded, placed into an alternative provision school and subsequently received a statement of SEN for autism. The way in which Jeremy experienced the world led to a disregard for the embodiment of inferiority, most explicitly seen in his (misunderstood) discussion with the school's new headmaster. He would also use inappropriate strategies for negotiating with his peers; "they'd say like the wrong thing to me and I'd just completely snap and smack them in the face or something". Jeremy's memories of finding work too easy in high school suggest that competing for the prize was not an issue in terms of his academic ability. Jeremy also discussed a tendency to build relationships with older pupils. He framed this as his peers annoying him but it may have been easier to negotiate with people outside his peer group.

The way in which Jeremy experienced the world meant that he did not adhere to the behavioural codes within the school and did not embody inferiority, even with the head teacher. He also had a tendency to break the codes of acceptable negotiation with competitors in the game. His disregard for the behavioural codes in the school led to his labelling as a 'bad kid' and eventually to his exclusion from mainstream.

A variety of needs were identified by young adults and providers in the research, all necessitating adaptation of the mainstream environment, though the processes by which marginalisation and exclusion occur were different. Kim and Lucy both experienced being diagnosed with Aspergers and ADHD, and Kim was also diagnosed with dyslexia. Both experienced labelling: Kim was singled out and had to eat her lunch in the library while Lucy, on transferring to a new school, heard teachers say they had 'heard about' her. Certainly in Lucy's case it was disregard for behavioural codes that led to her labelling. Kim presented

challenging behaviour in primary school but the school supported her and helped her mother get a statement in place. However, once she was in high school this statement led to labelling and to her being singled out and treated differently.

Dean and Phil both experienced diagnosis of ADHD. Dean characterised himself as loud, outspoken and very single minded. He enjoyed the more creative options which were available at high school – even sneaking into the music room at lunch time – and presented a challenging attitude towards other pupils and teachers. Phil characterised his behaviour as not thinking before acting, living in the ‘here and now’ and just wanting to have fun. He felt like teachers didn’t really know how to deal with his hyperactivity and just treated him like everyone else and he ended up getting kicked out of mainstream for ‘back chatting’ teachers. He was labelled as troublesome and in school was put into ‘Connexions’ – a national careers programme which has since broadly ceased to exist. Unfortunately his experience of this was that advisors just talked to him about how he should change; “rather than trying to find a way to help me they tried to stop me from being the way I am”. Phil summed up his experience by saying he hated school, hated teachers, persistently bunked off and was pleased when he got kicked out (at least to begin with before he got bored). However as if to compel a deeper, more empathic understanding of his response he added, “it is a lot more intimidating at a mainstream environment”.

For both Dean and Phil it was their unwillingness to play the inferiority game that led to their marginalisation and exclusion. Dean, likely because of his additional stressful experiences was supported into a more manageable situation. Phil ended up being labelled as troublesome, compounding the attention that was focussed upon him and leading to his exclusion. We see a level of rejection of the game itself in Phil truanting and being pleased about being kicked out. The intimidation he experienced in mainstream is likely an effect of the inferiority game – in being unwilling to play his inferior part it can be assumed he met a fair

amount of hostility.

Ed and John were both diagnosed as having dyslexia. For Ed this led to bullying because of his need for one to one support to help with learning. In Ed's opinion this was because "I think a lot of the kids didn't really think it was allowed and all that". John only experienced diagnosis of dyslexia once in college. Before this "they thought it was just me being a kid, I looked at it, didn't want to do it, so I'd say that I didn't understand it". His difficulty in understanding work led to disruptive and destructive behaviour. Reflecting on this he said "everyone put it down to I was just a kid ... when actually in the long run it turned out to be that I had dyslexia". Ed's experience was of being singled out and targeted by competitors in the form of bullying, It seems that the school only acted when his response changed. Shortly after being taken into care he retaliated and was excluded for a couple of weeks. After returning it happened again – he 'flipped out really bad' which was when the school decided to find an alternative placement. John's experience was of finding the academic achievement game, schooling itself, hard to get a handle on. This was interpreted by those around him as simply not wanting to do the work which led to his response becoming more destructive. John ended up with a very long record of misdemeanours, and was eventually excluded. Thus John's disruptive behaviour can be understood as a tactic to avoid playing the academic achievement game which for him, because of his dyslexia, wasn't a level playing field.

Thus in general, for young adults whose life events align to the SEND experience type it seems that there are two tracks, linking to experiences of behaviour and experiences of learning. Regarding behaviour, those who experienced a diagnosis of autism, Aspergers or ADHD disregarded or rejected the need to give at least the appearance of inferiority and insignificance. This led to these young adults being labelled as troublemakers leading to marginalisation and exclusion. For the latter, experiences related to learning were mentioned by those who had

experienced a diagnosis of dyslexia. This led to difficulties in playing the academic achievement game and one young adult was targeted by competitors and was bullied, while the other became disruptive and destructive to avoid playing the game and ended up labelled, marginalised and excluded.

It is not possible to predict those whose experiences of SEND will lead to marginalisation within, and exclusion from mainstream schooling. It would seem that for those young adults interviewed many experienced labelling in connection to their experiences of needing adaptation of the mainstream approach to schooling. In addition all the young adults mentioned above had experiences which aligned with other experience types in the model being discussed thus complicating their overall experience of mainstream schooling.

#### **7.3.4 Difficulties with authority**

A pupil who aligns with this experience type will struggle to respond 'appropriately' to teachers in the school environment and will have difficulties with being treated like a child. They may also be focussed on work, growing up or earning money and can therefore struggle to see how mainstream schooling prepares them for what they want to do in life. A pupil who experiences schooling in this way may manage to make it all the way through mainstream schooling by trading off different forms of capital against one another. However they can also find themselves marginalised from a system which does not recognise their full humanity and requires their inferiority to maintain and perpetuate the life of the school. Sam's story is considered below to highlight some of the ways in which this is played out in real life situations.

##### **7.3.4.1 Sam's story**

Sam's difficulties with schooling began in primary school and led to his exclusion and having a home tutor put in place. He described the challenge he presented in primary school as being cheeky and ignoring, or at least delaying adherence to, teachers' instructions about work. Sam found one to one tuition at home really helpful. His teacher was nice and it was a lot easier to concentrate. He was



allowed to return to mainstream for secondary schooling but was not allowed to begin until two weeks after everyone else had already started. Luckily Sam was not fazed by this. At mainstream school there were a few teachers he didn't get on with but others he did, in particular a deputy head, who tried to help him work through any clashes. Sam put clashes down to a mismatch of experienced approach; "my mum has always been laid back and ... some teachers used to think they had to be right in control". He ended up being kicked out around the middle of year nine after an incident with his PE teacher. After a brief placement elsewhere he attended an alternative provision centre until the end of year eleven. Of the PE teacher he said:

"he was quite a young, quite a young teacher and I think he, he was still trying a, decide what sort of way he was going to teach sort of thing. And err, he tried screaming and shouting and it just, laugh at him, like, what you think you're going to gain out of that mate, you ain't going to get nothing from shouting at me"

In addition to difficulties with playing the role of the pupil Sam also experienced the curriculum as irrelevant:

"I always thought to myself what.. I'm not gaining anything out of this, I'm not going to use.. Half the stuff I learnt in school I thought, I'm not going to do this when I'm older and out looking for a job".

In Sam's story there is both a difficulty with responding appropriately to teachers within the mainstream environment and a questioning of whether the learning that was taking place was of any relevance to what he wanted in life. He had a tendency to clash with authority figures and connected this to the laid back environment he experienced at home. It is interesting that being listened to (his deputy head ran a group with him and a few others) and having time to voice his

opinions was invaluable to him and in his own words; “without the help of them teachers I probably would have been kicked out before then”.

#### ***7.3.4.2 Connecting difficulties with authority with the field of mainstream schooling***

Sam experienced difficulties with schooling from a young age. He was excluded from primary school for being cheeky and ignoring and delaying response to teachers’ instructions. As children are not often excluded from primary school, it seems likely his behaviour was considered serious over a period of time (see, for example, Hayden, 1997). The way in which Sam experienced mainstream schooling meant that he challenged the authority of teachers, and did not assume inferiority and insignificance in his relationships. In contrast, when he was listened to and his views were respected he was far more positive and attributed the length of time he was able to stay in mainstream schooling to individuals who had done this. In terms of playing for the prize and pursuing academic achievement and qualifications Sam experienced a mismatch between what was taught and what he believed he would need for working life. Sam did not mention much which related to negotiation with other pupils for a position within the school population and seems to have been fairly successful in this; indeed this may be a case where his problematic interactions with staff helped in his negotiations with peers.

Four young adults whose experiences aligned with difficulties with authority also had experiences aligned with stress. Dean had presented a level of difficulty throughout his schooling which he broadly connected to ADHD, but after his parents split up this escalated and he felt like he didn’t need to give teachers any respect. Similarly, Nadia experienced going in and out of care over a summer break and after this she “had no respect for teachers or anything like that”. Dean and Nadia’s experiences meant that they were no longer willing to play by the rules and embody inferiority in their relationships with teachers.

James and John’s stressful experiences were less explicitly connected to their

difficulties with authority. James connected his difficulties with authority with his relationship to schooling in general; “school just weren’t for me to be honest, I’d rather be out doing something”. John had always been loud and outspoken in school and similarly to James he said; “I never really liked school anyway ... I didn’t want to be there, I didn’t see why I had to be there”. James and John both experienced not wanting to be at school, a rejection of the game being played and thus of its rule of embodied inferiority.

Lucy and Phil’s difficulties with authority seemed to be more similar to Sam’s in that they talked about them as more inherent. Lucy used to get bored and said; “I just didn’t think I had to do what I was asked to do at school”. Phil used to be rude to teachers and framed this as; “I think I’ve got problems with authoritative people”. Lucy and Phil both rejected the rules of the game by refusing to embody inferiority though from slightly differing positions. Lucy simply didn’t think the rules applied to her whilst Phil struggled with the notion and rejected it.

Thus in general young adults whose life events aligned to the difficulties with authority experience type all struggled with the notion of embodying inferiority in their relationships with teachers. This came about in a number of ways. For some stressful experiences led to rejection of the rules of play. Others didn’t want to be at school and their rejection of the game led to rejection of its rules. A final group, including Sam, rejected the embodiment of inferiority outright.

It is not possible to predict those whose experiences of difficulties with authority will lead to marginalisation within, and exclusion from, mainstream schooling. It is easy to imagine a situation where a pupil trades off the capital lost in a situation where they need to (at least appear to) embody inferiority by shoring up their competitors capital in acting out once the teachers back is turned. It may also be the case that if a pupil holds too much stock in ‘competitors capital’

they may end up in a position where they need to challenge the embodiment of inferiority directly in order to retain their position within the school pupil population. It does however seem to be those who disagree outright with the embodiment of inferiority who are most likely to end up marginalised and excluded from mainstream schooling.

#### **7.3.5 Systemic fault**

There was only one young adult whose experiences aligned with this experience type and initiated its development in the model, but it is possible to see how it may have been in play for others in the sample. Pupils whose stories fit this experience type will have been affected by an error in the schooling system which need not have occurred and without which they would most probably have remained in mainstream schooling.

##### ***7.3.5.1 Charlotte's story***

Charlotte grew up in another local authority and her memories of schooling were generally positive. For her difficulties emerged when she moved to high school and realised her sister was being bullied. She took it upon herself to deal with this and started being aggressive and violent with the bullies. This led to her getting in trouble at school, although she was never excluded and most of the difficulties occurred outside of classes at the end of the school day. When she was in year eight, her, her mother and sister decided to move to LA1 for a fresh start. They both chose schools and her sister was admitted without difficulty. Charlotte initially chose a different school to her sister and had been provisionally accepted when her sister's school got in touch and suggested that she should go to them as well because she was in their catchment area. Charlotte's choice school agreed to this but then her sister's school looked at her record and decided that they couldn't take her because of her previous behaviour.

This led to a number of months with no educational provision at all. Eventually an alternative provision school got in touch and she started attending there. She

then moved to another alternative provision before returning to mainstream schooling around two years later. During her time in alternative provision she had suffered academically but had since got onto the course she wanted to study at college and was heading for the teaching qualification she aspired to. For Charlotte this had not been an entirely negative experience:

“I’ve found that there’s more than just one path to get you there and it doesn’t matter which one you get as long as you still get your goal at the end ... When you look at it from a whole.. Academically I’ve dropped drastically but I’ve succeeded in so many other things...it taught me more of a connection with the people than high school ever could”

In Charlotte’s story there is a definite breakdown in the system given that it was over two years before she started attending mainstream schooling after her arrival in LA 1 yet was highly likely to have been in a position to do so all along. At the same time the labelling of her behaviour is also significant.

Charlotte had experienced some difficulties in her schooling before moving to LA1. This was in the form of being aggressive and violent with other students who were bullying her sister. This took place outside of lessons. Charlotte had struggled with playing by the rules in a game which she saw as damaging her sister. This behaviour had been formalised in paperwork and led to her non admittance to mainstream school upon arrival in LA1.

To develop a more general understanding of the systemic fault experience type other young adults’ experiences will be considered. Ollie’s experience was similar to Charlotte’s in that he moved to LA1 from elsewhere. For him, his previous experience of bullying meant he wasn’t happy going to the school he was offered a place at. In his account this meant he ended up out of school for the rest of year eleven and beyond. Jenny also experienced bullying and was

initially placed in the school's inclusion unit where there was very limited to no support with learning. She was eventually moved to an alternative provision school once her CAMHS worker got involved, and it was her impression that "the school were putting it off because they had to pay funding". Paul had attended an extremely high number of alternative provision schools. This process was set in motion by an incident which led to his exclusion from mainstream school. He had presented difficult behaviour previously but was also being supported within mainstream school. When he got kicked out he thought that he would go to another specific mainstream school and when he was offered a place at a different school he declined it. Again the voice of the young adult was ignored at the time leading to inappropriate or a lack of schooling.

Thus in general young adults whose life events aligned to the systemic fault experience type also had underlying experiences relating to the other pupil experience types but were specifically held back from what may well have been more successful placements because there was not space for their wishes and views to be accommodated. It is not possible to predict where systemic faults will occur; however, the voice of the young person in question needs to be invited and heard for systemic faults to be avoided.

#### **7.4 Conclusion and summary.**

The pupil experience types discussed above are summarised in the table at the beginning of this chapter with a descriptive account of types of experiences and an outline of how these experiences impact on a pupil's play in the field of mainstream schooling.

The final chapter of findings connects these pupil experience types to successful alternative provision practice. The accounts of the young adults will be used to develop a model of what successful practice can achieve with these different pupil experience types. The young adults' accounts of positive change will be connected to the field of alternative provision schooling so as to develop a

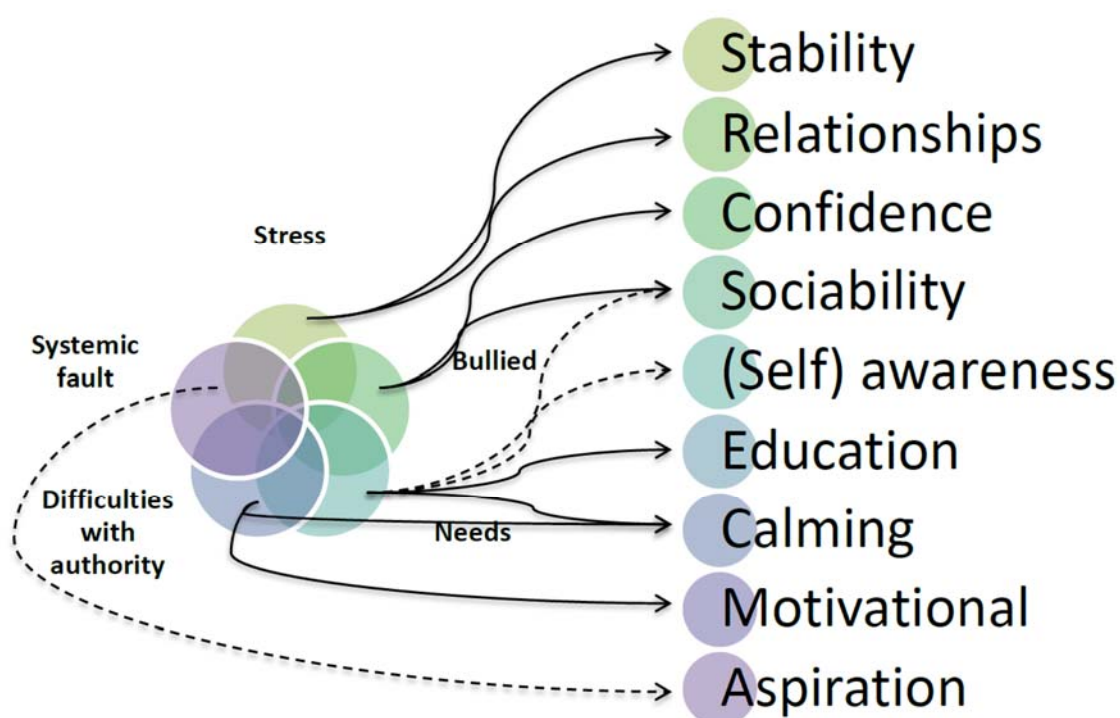
grounded understanding of the dynamics and forces at play.

## 8 Findings: trajectories of success

*“it changed your mind set ... entirely changed the way I acted” (Carl)*

This chapter examines the nature of successful alternative provision practice. The process by which the influences outlined below were developed and connected to the model of pupil experience types has been covered in the analysis section of the methodology chapter. Connections between experience types and trajectories are illustrated below. The following will discuss each of the nine influences in turn, giving examples from young adults’ accounts of their experiences and connecting each influence into the field of alternative provision schooling.

Figure 8.1 – Types of experience and Trajectories model



In chapter 7, types of pupil experience were discussed alongside the capital at



play in the field of mainstream schooling. Flouting the rules, struggling with competitors and rejecting the rationale for the game itself were ways in which the capital at play interacted with the young adults accounts of marginalisation and exclusion. In this chapter the capital at play and the field remain important, but the habitus embodied by those in the field of alternative provision schooling is most pertinent to the analysis. Following the discussion of the nine influences, the model connecting pupil experience types to influences of alternative provision will be discussed. As with the model of pupil experience types, the development of the influences of alternative provision is not meant to be prescriptive but seeks to generalise experiences so as to provide a framework of ideas helpful to practitioners and policy makers. It is also believed this framework will be able to be used as a departure point for further research and the development of better practice in the field of alternative provision schooling. In seeing a positive role for alternative provision this model will also challenge the progressive conception of inclusive schooling. However given its on-going existence it is important to consider the role alternative provision plays in facilitating young peoples' opportunities as they progress into adult life. The nine influences to be discussed below are: stability, relationships, confidence, sociability, (self) awareness, education, calming, motivational, and aspiration.

### **8.1 Stability**

Alternative provision schooling can provide a safe, stable place where there is structure and support. This provides an opportunity for pupils to 'get back in the right place' or 'find themselves' it can provide a positive option or a 'lull' in an otherwise hectic experience of life (as Gazeley, 2010).

It was Dean who described alternative provision as a 'lull' saying, "it's perfect for that lull where people are trying to find themselves. However they run it, however they do it, it works for everyone I was with". The word 'lull' conveys a sense of space and calm within an otherwise stormy situation. Dean saw this as supporting people in finding themselves, developing a level of self-assurance.

Nadia was going through a particularly difficult time when she was at alternative provision. She had just started living on her own and she was pregnant. She said; “it wasn’t a very nice time for me and having the people there to support me, I don’t know what I would have done if I didn’t have the, if I didn’t have school basically”. The support offered to Nadia provided stability when she was experiencing a lot of change. This was the same for Emily who said; “I think the stability is the only time in my life that I can actually do stuff, so I mean if you’re not, at the end of the day, if you’re not stable in your work, your education, your home life anything like that, when one falls out of balance often they all fall out of balance”. Emily recognised that difficulties in one area of life can exacerbate difficulties elsewhere, but just as this is true, stability provides a grounding from which an individual ‘can actually do stuff’. Stability in one area of life can provide an opportunity to begin to build stability elsewhere. Both Nadia and Emily mentioned that the structure in place at alternative provision helped them. Emily appreciated that it was more like mainstream school and Nadia thought her full time placement was helpful in providing boundaries. Talking about her time in alternative provision in year eleven, Emily said; “to be honest that’s what put me back in the right place from all the stuff that happened before, that’s what helped me to focus, year eleven was the best year of my high school”. Charlotte’s articulation of the stability of alternative provision was in terms of safety and relationships; “I think it’s more of a safer atmosphere there because it’s so, it’s, I guess when you get to know everyone, you get to know the different members of staff and it becomes sort of like a family, that you can relate to, you can speak to”. This begins to lead us towards the influence of relationships but before beginning to consider that, the influence of stability must be connected into the field of alternative provision schooling.

Through the young adults accounts it can be seen that alternative provision schooling provides a safe space where there is support. This stability can enable young people to find themselves, and begin to get back on their feet by

beginning to build stability in other areas of their lives. It is possible to see here the development of a reflective disposition in the young adults' accounts of their experiences of alternative provision, and demonstrates the merit of the methodological approach in focusing upon this group. This connects to the recognition that there is a root cause to difficult behaviour. Staff embody a disposition towards consideration of wider social and environmental factors when interacting with students which develops such reflection. The embodiment of a reflective disposition, in conjunction with a safe and stable environment enables young people in alternative provision schooling to begin to reflect on the wider social and environmental factors at play in their situation and even begin to address them, as is suggested by Dean and in particular Emily.

## **8.2 Relationships**

Alternative provision schooling provides an opportunity for respectful relationships with adults which mean that young people feel safe, respected and cared about. These relationships are on more of an even footing, especially when compared to the hierarchy in place in mainstream schooling, and young adults often used words such as family, home and friends to describe them. Moving on from alternative provision schooling the characteristics of these relationships can enable young people to continue building successful relationships in whatever they move onto.

Dean, Charlotte, Josh and Carl all used the language of family, friend or home to describe the relationships they experienced at alternative provision and although he didn't use this language Paul too recognised that "outside school the relationships with the teachers was better". For Charlotte, the reason it felt like a family atmosphere was because of the level and depth of relationships which developed, getting to know members of staff in a safe atmosphere. Carl discussed how staff treated students with respect. He connected this to students reciprocating in kind. Nadia spoke similarly of respectful relationship towards teachers. In her experience alternative provision was relaxed and staff were

open. This led to a situation where; “the people that was already there had a lot of respect for the teachers it kind of, when you was new you wasn’t really disrespectful to them because everybody had a really good relationship with them”. We see here that though her previous disposition was not oriented towards respect for teachers, upon entering this alternative provision she developed a new approach to relationships with staff. In Jeremy’s experience these relationships offered an opportunity to offload; “You have that relationship with someone where you can just sit there, talk to them, tell them your problems, even if they don’t like give you any advice, you’ve got it off your chest”. This shows how relationships can intertwine with the development of stability, getting things off his chest in a safe environment enabling reflection on social and environmental issues. Liz saw staff in alternative provision as ‘more on your level’ and that an outcome of this was the ability to build relationships.

Similarly Emily said that the relationships she developed at alternative provision put her in a place to start college successfully. More than this though, she started to like adults more and to have better relationships with those who worked with and around her – this was not an insignificant number of professionals given that Emily was in care. She saw that she was better able to work with people and ‘not speak to them like a piece of crap’, something she was very happy about. She said:

“Really a lot of it was the relationships I had with the, with the staff members, I mean as well as the young people I was around because a lot of them were good, very good young people that also was in the same position where they wanted to learn and kind of get somewhere, so as well as having that positivity around you, you had the teachers that you did feel they cared and they listened and ... they just really wanted you to get, you know to go somewhere and to do something. So it was nice to have that feeling that, you know, that other people did believe in you.

Not a pressure, not an expectation just a, you know, it was nice”

It is particularly interesting that Emily saw positive relationships coming from other students as well as members of staff. This challenges the view of pupils who are out of mainstream schooling as a likely negative influence on one another and is similar to the process Nadia described when she started alternative provision and took a lead from other pupils in regards to how to interact with staff.

Through the young adults accounts considered above it can be seen that the relationships that develop in the field of alternative provision schooling are on a more even footing and are analogous to family or friendship relationships. This approach engenders mutual respect and develops in students an ability, when they move on, to engage in grown up, respectful relationships. It is possible to see here the internalisation and embodiment of responsibility alongside respect and more equal adult relationships. This connects to the characteristics of relationships in alternative provision schooling which mean staff develop meaningful relationships with students whilst taking a highly professional approach, holding the tension between structure and flexibility. This puts them in a position to enable learning to take place without the need for formal coercion as would frequently be the case in the field of mainstream schooling. The environment leads to the embodiment of habitus by students’ that helps to put them in a position to negotiate adult life where coercion is infrequent and relational agreements are far more common in guiding decisions and agreements.

### **8.3 Confidence**

Alternative provision can provide an opportunity for those who need it to become more confident, less anxious, develop their self-esteem and become more confident in being able to speak to people. This confidence relates to being able to be, and participate, in social situations. This puts students in a

good position going forwards as they are more likely to feel able to engage in future situations they will meet. This can be as simple as working behind a bar and feeling able to participate in conversation.

James, Emily, Ollie, Josh, Carl and Jenny all mentioned that their experiences in alternative provision built their confidence. This was currently on going for James who was in a 16-plus provision. For Emily her increased confidence helped her as she moved into college and Ollie connected the confidence he had built to being in employment. Josh also discussed how his experience in alternative provision built confidence and self-esteem because of the way he was taught, the staff made him feel good about himself, “not trying to boost you falsely but saying, yes you’re good at this, this is what you should work on, they obviously pointed out some of the negatives but not, they didn’t dwell on them”. It is evident that Josh valued the honesty in this approach, the fact the he received some comments on what to work on. It is clear that the encouragement was also key. Picking up on the skills students have and developing them further is an important teaching method that there is often the time and space to undertake within an alternative provision school. Carl described himself as overly shy when he started at alternative provision. However his experience and speaking to people he had never spoken to before boosted his confidence; “they taught me how to, how to come out of my shell a bit more”. Like Ollie, this increased confidence helped him as he progressed into the world of work in an apprenticeship where his confidence was developed even further:

“I’m a lot more confident from working at Pelling because they boosted your confidence ridiculously. My confidence from The Bassment to Pelling just boosted ridiculously because it was put into the open world, we were doing tasks, it felt like the apprentice”

Carl’s experience within alternative provision meant that he was able to access

further opportunities which before that time he would likely have struggled with. Carl was one of the young adults who was re-interviewed. When commenting on the kinds of success which were relevant for a young person who has experienced bullying he said:

“for bullied I reckon that also creates a safe environment because you feel you’re away from all those bullies and the, you’re away from everything that is tormenting you.”

It is understandable that the opportunity to begin new relationships unconstrained by previous experiences can be liberating for young people who have been bullied. It is an opportunity to move away from the positions and dispositions that had become embodied by themselves and those around them. Jenny, who had also been bullied, commented about alternative provision that:

“It gave me a lot of confidence, and, it also gave me confidence because they didn’t say what the other people said, so I kind of knew it weren’t true then. Cos otherwise they’d be saying it as well.”

The experience of a different situation where what had become ingrained was challenged by its absence provided fertile ground for Jenny’s confidence to increase. She said; “I had no problems after that, and my anxiety got better, I was friends with everyone there, yeah it was really good”. When discussing how her experience of alternative provision had influenced her she connected the friendships she had developed to a ‘changed way of thinking’. This is very similar to Carl who referred to a ‘changed mind set’ and clearly connects to the fact that the field of alternative provision is fundamentally different to the field of mainstream education and necessitates the development and embodiment of a new habitus.

It can be seen from the young adults' accounts above that the confidence influenced by alternative provision schooling is connected into reality and helps with moving on. This can be simply with taking the next step into something new or with moving into the world of work and the social situations encountered there. Alternative provision provides a fresh start where untruths can be challenged by the experience of a new situation. As has been outlined above, relationships are fundamental to alternative provision practice. Thus the young person who has previously been disengaged is challenged to engage. It is of course important that this challenge comes in a safe and supportive space. Developing relationships, social learning and communication are therefore all part of the capital at play in the field of alternative provision schooling. Confidence is also increased as young people begin to question whether things that have rocked their confidence previously were grounded in reality and in turn are more able to embody a new disposition.

#### **8.4 Sociability**

Alternative provision schooling provides opportunities for talking to and interacting with others. Making friends and socialising can be extremely important for young people who have experienced bullying or who have been in situations where their opportunities for this have been limited. Helping others, reconciliation and developing openness are also connected to the influence alternative provision can have on a young person's sociability. Beyond alternative provision increased sociability puts young people in a position to engage well with others and address any conflict maturely.

Charlotte, Jeremy, Ed, Paul, Kim, Nadia, Jenny, Sam, Liz, Emily, Phil, Josh and Carl all experienced alternative provision as influencing their sociability. Charlotte explicitly contrasted alternative provision with mainstream and said; "it taught me more of a connection with the people that high school ever could". Jeremy discussed how the activities that took place provided an environment that got people talking and interacting with each other. Although initially nervous about



attending Ed went on to build good friendships with other young people at alternative provision. Building friendships was important for others too; Kim, Nadia and Jenny all mentioned friendships. As a 'quiet person', Kim would just sit and not be bothered but at alternative provision she was helped to socialise more. In addition to connecting making friends to confidence building Jenny also commented that friendships helped her with, "being able to talk to people again". She went on to reinforce the informality of this process: "it wasn't ever sat down in a room and psychologists there, it was just friends and that was it". Sam discussed the reconciliation which was part of his experience at alternative provision because it was on such a small scale:

"if you had an argument with someone you couldn't go off somewhere and ignore them for the rest of the day so you sort of had to make up sort of thing as well"

Somewhat similarly Paul's experiences helped him to be more open with people and "see how they're doing". This orientation towards others was something picked up from practice within alternative provision in general – Paul attended more alternative provision schools than any other young adult interviewed. His experience was that, "in all the places it was always like, the students.. like getting the students to help each other". He reflected that this was good and can clearly be seen as impacting on his disposition towards others, seeking to 'help people' and 'see how they're doing'.

Jeremy's interactions with others and his sociability in general took a clear turn for the better in his articulation of the change from when he began to attend alternative provision:

"when I first went there I knew a couple of people that were there, I'd speak to them, other people I'd look at them and I'd just be like you just

look like a complete and utter knob, And I wouldn't bother. I'd just think, if you're a dick why am I going to bother but afterwards it's just like to be honest I don't care who you are, what you look like whatever, it was just like, I'll speak to you, if you speak to me back, fine whatever, if you don't cool, it's not a problem to me"

Liz's experience was similar:

"I guess the confidence that I got from being outside of school ... helped me to realise that I wasn't incapable of talking to people"

Liz made connections between the development of her sociability and her experience of employment working in a pub whilst at college. Emily also made connections between having opportunities for socialising and moving beyond alternative provision. When she went to college she felt that she was able to socialise just as she had done in alternative provision. The ability to socialise is clearly important, especially for those who have experienced marginalisation and exclusion from school and thus reduced opportunities for socialising with their peers. Phil made this very connection; "because I spent so much time at home I wasn't very like, I'm still not very ... sociable still but I've got a lot better since school". The experience of being in alternative provision had made him more of a '*mingly person*' and had enabled him to build social skills moving away from his previous disposition as he had been "the most unsociable kid going through school".

As well as 'coming out of his shell' a bit more Carl also learned how to interact with different kinds of people during his time in alternative provision. He made clear connections between this and his work where he has to interact with corporate companies and talk to CEOs; though he might not always want to talk to these people he felt like alternative provision had helped him learn the skills

he needed for these situations.

It can be seen from the young adults' accounts above that sociability is influenced by alternative provision firstly in terms of simply developing friendships. This can be influential in restoring self-belief regarding one's ability to interact in social situations and can also begin to make up for lost time for those who have experienced marginalisation and exclusion from school and thus a lack of opportunity to engage with peers. Sociability in terms of learning to engage well with others and developing an ability and propensity to resolve conflict was also present in young adults' accounts. Finally, some young adults talked about an 'other orientation' which seems to be connected to experiences of helping and supporting others but also seems to have been taken up into their general disposition moving forwards.

The smaller scale and flexibility of alternative provision means that there is time and opportunity for young people to develop friendships with their peers. In addition to this the characteristics of the relationships developed by staff with students at alternative provision also seems to have a tendency to rub off on peer relationships. Thus learning to navigate conflict, respecting others in interactions with them and a general orientation towards others developed. This once more connects to the capitals of developing relationships and social learning/getting on with others which are at play in alternative provision schooling.

### **8.5 (Self) awareness**

Alternative provision schooling provides opportunities for young people to develop both general awareness of other paths, opportunities and choices and to become more self-aware and able to understand and negotiate risky or complex situations.

Paul, Josh, Kim, Jenny and Charlotte all experienced alternative provision as

influencing their (self) awareness. In Paul's experience this related to risky choices that were becoming available at the age of 14 or 15 such as smoking and drinking. He never got involved with these things because of his experience in alternative provision where they talked to him about "what it actually does and how it's bad and that". For Josh being around people who had come from challenging situations, who for example, "could potentially carry a knife on them because that's what they know" provided a context for learning "how to read body language ... knowing when someone's going to get upset with you or knowing when someone's getting agitated". The example Josh uses here may raise eyebrows. However he clearly developed self-awareness in this context connected to his previously reported behaviour of 'pushing people to the max' and irritating them. It is important to note that Josh also recounted that those who managed the alternative provision wouldn't tolerate any behaviour of the sort that he mentioned above. His account is thus mainly about learning to navigate relationships and developing an awareness of those who have come from significantly differing background situations and who therefore embody dispositions relevant to their habitus. Josh also recounted an instance where a member of staff asked him why he was being defensive and went on to point out that he had both his arms and legs crossed. Josh reflected that he didn't experience this as being pulled up but rather as being made aware of his response at the time and thus able to choose to engage differently. Kim used to run away from school and once at alternative provision still did this a couple of times. The response however was different, as one of the staff got in their car and went looking for her. Kim connected this to the good relationships she developed with staff and put her teacher in a position to point out the risks. Kim reflected, "anyone can get you in their car, and it kind of made me realise so I stopped running off". In Kim's experience the response and the relationship led to a positive change of behaviour.

Sam had ideas about what he wanted to do when he left school and was even

doing some building work whilst still in school. He did however reflect that it was good to have someone “put their side across as well ... they might say well, alright yeah maybe that, but I think you might be suited more to this ... Not just say yeah that’s it, we’ll do that, give you maybe other ideas into what they think you might be suited to better as well”. This process of positive challenge and discussion of young peoples’ plans shows that for this sample staff were seeking to broaden the horizons of the young people they work with. It was Charlotte whose story included the most significant development of awareness. She had started out with an assumption along the lines of, get from ‘a to b’ as successfully as you can and get as much as you can out of it. This is not of itself a bad underlying assumption but she reflected that her experiences of alternative provision gave her a completely different sense of what was achievable and how you can get there. This is arguably a helpful awareness to have developed given the nature of careership outlined by Hodkinson (2007).

The development of self-awareness can be seen as a normal element in adolescent development, but the young adults in this sample felt that alternative provision had been helpful in this aspect of their lives. This placed them in a better position to navigate life after alternative provision. Where young people have come to embody unhelpful patterns of behaviour for interacting with others in social situations, alternative provision can provide a context in which they can become aware of themselves, of what they are choosing and of other options available to them. For Jenny this was to trust others, for Kim it was to stop running away. The broader conceptualisation of success in alternative provision schooling means young people can develop a habitus which takes seriously progression which is freed from the hegemony of, but not mutually exclusive from, academic achievement.

## **8.6 Education**

Alternative provision schooling provides opportunities for young people to gain qualifications, take part in volunteering or work experience and to feel and

become prepared for college and further education. Qualifications provided both a sense of achievement and of normalisation – in particular GCSEs – and were connected into being able to progress onto college and further education. Volunteering and work experience were of particular importance for those who had had these opportunities and were often influential in educational choices post alternative provision, again reflecting Hodgkinson’s work on ‘Careership’ (2007).

Every single young adult interviewed mentioned qualifications. This can be understood as a way in which the force of achievement through qualifications – the premise of the game being played out in the field of mainstream schooling – reaches out well beyond the formal boundaries of the school. This is unsurprising given that standardisation through qualifications is predicated upon neo-liberal ideas and is a powerful force throughout society. The educational influence of alternative provision connected to qualifications but also to ways in which the educational opportunities and options available to young people were developed. Ed, Jenny, Ollie, Phil, Jeremy, Lucy, Kim and Emily all discussed ways in which this was borne out in their experience. Ed mentioned a ten week (post-16) course where a qualification was undertaken each week, all at level one, in a range of subjects. Ollie also mentioned that he had gained numerous qualifications through attending alternative provision for two years (this was post-16). Later in his interview he went on to say, “I thought, I’ve achieved something here, coming out of school with no qualifications to gaining qualifications, I was very very proud of myself”. This sense of achievement, at times connected to quantity, was also shared by others. Jeremy mentioned that he was the youngest person to achieve a particular award and Phil achieved Adult Literacy and Numeracy and ‘loads of other stuff’ during his time at alternative provision. Jenny completed GCSEs in English, Maths, Science, English Lit, Art and History and in her opinion wouldn’t have got her GCSEs if she hadn’t moved from her mainstream school’s inclusion unit to an alternative provision

school. Jeremy and Lucy both gained qualifications which were connected to their areas of work. Lucy was supported into a college course alongside working for her GCSEs and gained level two accountancy. When interviewed she had worked in various related jobs and was currently working as a finance assistant while studying for her accountancy level 4. Jeremy had been in and out of work and when initially interviewed had talked about:

“going and doing some voluntary work somewhere else to get some off.. like office experience as well cos I mean I’ve got the qualifications but no one’s hiring me because I haven’t got the experience so.. Looking to do some voluntary work get some experience”

When re-interviewed a few weeks later he had been working in administration for an NHS company on an apprenticeship for the last month. Similarly to Jenny above, Kim was of the opinion that had she not attended alternative provision she would have no GCSEs, wouldn’t have been able to go to college and ‘wouldn’t have anything now’. Kim was one of those who was supported into voluntary work in a nursery whilst in alternative provision. She commented that:

“When I want to do something I’ll spend all my time doing it and I think they realised that and they really just helped me, they give me that push to, you know, let me do it”

Kim had gone on to complete further qualifications in child care and volunteered elsewhere. When interviewed her son had just settled into a new school and she was hoping to pick up her interest in childcare once more. Charlotte had also been set up with work experience in a school whilst at alternative provision. She found this motivating and reflected:

“I would do that and it would always keep my mind focussed on what I

want and it would make sure that I don't give up. So it was like I always seen, when I was there it was like I could see myself being there full time and it gave me the drive to want to carry on"

When interviewed Charlotte was just working on a level three diploma in childcare and education and was planning to go on to study for a teaching degree. Both Emily and Jenny seemed to connect the experience of studying for GCSEs to a normalised situation. This is understandable given the dominance of GCSEs as the output of mainstream schooling. Emily said; "I actually got sort of on the way to doing my GCSEs" whilst Jenny commented that "I was doing my GCSEs and everything". Both comments suggest a level of pride and restored normality after disruption in being able to work on GCSE level qualifications. This is likely to be intertwined with feeling that "at the time it would have been a good point for me to start college, I did feel prepared, [the alternative provision] helped me".

It can be seen from the young adults' accounts above that alternative provision provided an important context for educational opportunities. A simple sense of achievement is not to be underestimated for those who have struggled in previous contexts. A number of others attributed their ability to gain GCSEs to their placement into alternative provision with some conveying that studying for GCSEs restored a sense of normality. Others had had educational influences which were playing out in their working life. Some were working in the same field in which they had gained qualifications in alternative provision and others were intending to continue on the path started by the work experience they had undertaken alongside alternative provision. The sense of achievement regarding qualifications and the opportunity for some to gain GCSEs connects more to the premise of the academic achievement game played in mainstream schooling than forces at play in the field of alternative provision schooling. As noted above, the force of the game played in mainstream schooling is strong and



reaches out well beyond the boundaries of the mainstream school. In the field of alternative provision schooling there is a broader conceptualisation of success and curriculum which provides greater opportunity for young people to experience a sense of achievement connected to their work at school. The ability to influence one's learning, digging down into what a young person is interested in and thus the development of a future orientation are connected to practice in alternative provision. This can be seen in Lucy's account and also Charlotte's. Choice related to a young person's interest, a broader conceptualisation of learning (e.g. college placements and work experience) and of curriculum (e.g. accountancy, business administration and childcare) are of particular importance to the educational influence of alternative provision schooling. This is particularly relevant and important given the opportunity for education in mainstream schooling has broken down and been removed for these young people.

### **8.7 Calming influence**

Alternative provision schooling provides an environment in which young people can become calmer, experience less anger, a changed attitude and have the opportunity to reassess reactionary responses. This calming process can create space for young people to engage with timetabled learning, as well as helping improve their relationships both in and outside of alternative provision and providing a platform for dealing with conflict into the future.

Sam, Jeremy, Emily, Kim, Josh, Nadia, Phil and John all reflected on the calming influence of alternative provision in their experience. Sam became patient, calmer and 'more of a mellow person' through his time at alternative provision. Jeremy, Emily and Kim all became less angry. Jeremy calmed down and "started laughing, joking around with everyone rather than with just a select few people". Emily "learnt to respect people and to not speak to them like a piece of crap" and Kim felt that she changed her attitude towards things; she became less angry at the world and everyone.

Nadia experienced the calming influence as evident throughout her life. For her the calming experience that was part of alternative provision came alongside the situational experience of pregnancy:

“Going to the centre did have a massive positive impact on my life, if I didn’t go I don’t know what route I would have gone down, everyone says that. It wasn’t just the Bowden centre though, it was also being pregnant at the same, like at that time, if.. I say myself Jonathan saved my life because if I wasn’t pregnant with him I don’t know what route I would have gone down to and I probably wouldn’t be alive today”

As well as discussing experiences of the calming influence of alternative provision, Phil, John and Sam also reflected on what it was about alternative provision that made this possible. Phil was quite energetic and aggressive at school but through subsequent placements into alternative provision became a lot calmer. When asked what it was that helped him calm down he responded:

“I think it’s just generally being in that environment of just, where, you’re with people that aren’t out to, to get you like, to put me in a worser spot than I’m in, they’re actually out to help me”

Similarly for John, experiencing better relationships with teachers provided a context in which, in relation to schooling, he “started to go with it instead of fighting it”. Speaking more generally about his time in alternative provision which came alongside significant change and difficulty in his life outside of school he reflected; “that six months really gave me time to adjust and made me reflect on how much of a twat I was earlier on”. Sam was also influenced by relationships with staff. For him the way staff interacted with students provided an informal learning opportunity:

“I think the way they handled us differently to the other schools, it sort of showed you different way, like you could just take a second, instead of just exploding straight away in some [indistinct] or something, take a second, calm down and then answer, or if you really don’t want to you don’t have to stay there and confront it you could just walk away from stuff if you.. you don’t have to stay and fight your corner all the time. You can walk away from it and just, you know”

It can be seen from the young adults’ accounts above that alternative provision can be a calming influence, providing a space where young people frequently become less angry, can learn to take a calmer approach to situations in life, reassess previous responses and choose a different way. Young adults who reflected on what it was about alternative provision which enabled this change invariably mentioned relationships with staff and the way they as students were treated. This clearly connects to the importance of relationships in alternative provision. As previously explored, the habitus developed by students in alternative provision involves the internalisation of responsibility alongside respect and more equal adult relationships. Being treated in a more adult manner and with respect engendered a mutual response. For Sam, even if something did rile him instead of exploding straight away he would take a second to calm down and answer. He internalised a responsibility to respond with the same respect that he had learnt he received within alternative provision. This of course would not have happened straight away as all students will be on their own trajectory through the field of alternative provision. Saying this, Nadia was impacted by the habitus of other students’ relationships with staff upon arrival (see above). It is also of course the case that a student travelling through the field of alternative provision may never come to internalise this particular disposition as alternative provision itself exists on the margins of the schooling system. In addition to the effect of relationships, the

assumption of a root cause to difficult behaviour leading to a reflective disposition in students can be seen in John's account of having time to reflect on previous choices and make new ones. Somewhat similarly, Josh's experience involved reflecting that his behaviour which involved pushing people 'to their limit' might be helpfully changed. This also connects into the capital of social learning and getting on with others which is at play in alternative provision. Had Josh not been in a situation where this was the capital at stake he may not have begun the process of learning to choose differently in his behaviour with others.

### **8.8 Motivational influence**

Alternative provision schooling provides an environment in which young people can develop and experience a sense of purpose and motivation which they may not have accessed previously. A future orientation and an understanding of the relevance of work, in particular some aspects of school work, are also often developed. Young people will often leave alternative provision with a developed passion for a particular topic or activity which can help them in navigating life's choices. They will often become grounded in what they want to do, how they can reasonably get there and will internalise an acceptance that some aspects of this path will involve hard work.

Dean, Kim, Charlotte, John, Ed, Lucy, Josh, Carl, Phil and Sam all experienced alternative provision as having motivational influence in their lives. Dean and Ed experienced this as wanting to turn up and wanting to learn; Ed used to arrive early 'ready to do what I wanted to do'. Dean said:

"It gave me a sense of purpose ... I had something to get up to and look forward to and do, you know what I mean, whereas no kid wants to get up and go to school, you know what I mean. It definitely gave me a sense of purpose"

This turn around, of wanting to go into school, was not uncommon and it is

important to recognise that this in itself is verging on remarkable for pupils who have experienced marginalisation and exclusion within mainstream schooling. Charlotte, Kim and John all experienced motivation as orienting them towards their future. As mentioned previously Charlotte's work experience kept her focussed on what she wanted to do and gave her the drive to carry on. Kim attributed her teacher's interest in her future and their support to her successes in life. She said, it was thanks to them "that I am where I am now, I'm not, you know, sitting on my back side doing nothing all the time". In John's experience the motivation came from a more negative frame of reference but was nevertheless connected to his experience of alternative provision which, as has been seen elsewhere, did provide a positive framework for him to move on from. For John, looking back at the mainstream environment and seeing his friends there and himself out of the environment because he had been in trouble made him realise "that being a little shit gets you nowhere". So he decided "that maybe if I buckled down and try and sort it out I might actually be able to recover in time to be able to get back up on my feet and hopefully get somewhere. Which, like I said I was lucky enough to be able to do". Despite a diversity of experience it is clear that alternative provision schooling does influence motivation with regards to future orientation.

Ed, Kim, Lucy, John, Josh and Carl all experienced motivational influence connected to changed behaviour. Ed said:

"they made me more motivated, a lot, they made me be like willing to go and do stuff now, cos like beforehand I just, as I said I didn't want to get out of bed, didn't want to do nothing, but now I literally, I just want to get out, go find something"

It was clear that the motivation Ed had developed and embodied during his time in alternative provision had stayed with him and provided drive in his adult life.

Whilst at alternative provision Kim realised that she needed to “buck my ideas up” and Lucy attributed “a hundred per cent” of what she had gone on to do to those who had helped her. Lucy had a particularly revelatory moment connected to the experiences of other students who were at the school, quoted in full on page 161. The reality that she had a choice was not something Lucy had previously appreciated but in being around others who experienced life in a range of ways taught her this. Important experiences that came alongside this for her were of staff listening and respecting her and developing a reflective disposition which can be seen in her musings above. John connected his experience of realising that presenting difficult behaviour had got him nowhere to a desire to walk out of school with something, “even if it’s E’s in everything I can then look back in, like now with my little brother and sister going to school and give them a target”. Although they didn’t specify ways in which it had changed their behaviour both Josh and Carl were sure that their experiences of alternative provision had been incredibly influential for them. Josh said; “due to the Bass-ment and Helen Bates I have managed to get to this fantastic stage in my life that I’m now going through” and “I think if I didn’t have the Bass-ment I wouldn’t be here now, pretty much, I wouldn’t, it a given I wouldn’t be here right now. It started me doing a lot of stuff”. Although broad, it is clear that alternative provision was the catalyst. Similarly for Carl; “going to [the Bass-ment was the best decision in my life ... if the school didn’t refer me, if they didn’t set up these schemes, these extra provisions, I wouldn’t have done, I wouldn’t be where I am today, so its thanks to all that that I’m here, and doing this interview!”

Phil, Josh, Carl and Sam provided some reflections on how alternative provision had been a motivating influence for them. Phil experienced staff who would try to help him see why doing something was good to do rather than telling him that it was. In a similar vein, Carl felt that staff “showed me what was important in life, they didn’t just tell me, you’ve got to be confident, they said look, you’ve got

to attend because if you don't attend what's it going to be like when you go to work". The future orientation can be seen once again here but it is the showing and explaining rather than telling which is so clearly appreciated by both Phil and Carl. Sam again experienced motivation around work through teaching staff who in his experience were "trying to help you cos they want you to do good in life basically like um.. So the stuff they are teaching you is for a reason". Kim also appreciated that she was no longer forced into school work, but for her it wasn't that it was connected to reasoning around it being useful or necessary for life. For her it was simply a friendlier, relaxed atmosphere. This made her "willing to learn" and listen to what teachers were presenting in lessons. Josh and Carl, who rooted their current successes in their experiences in alternative provision, both experienced great encouragement from staff:

"Great guys, really, they changed my life really. They're the ones that said you need to do it" (Josh)

And

"they pushed and pushed and pushed and pushed, more than anyone else in my life had ever" (Carl)

It can be seen from the young adults' accounts above that alternative provision can provide a motivational influence, an environment which young people actually want to attend despite previous experiences of schooling. It can orient young people towards their future and provide drive in their chosen direction. It can change a young person's behaviour and motivate them to make different choices. The impetus for this motivation is often mediated by relationships with staff who encourage and help young people map out and connect their current experience into the territory they will embark upon in moving on from formal education into the adult world. It can be seen in the young adults' accounts that

the caring, supportive teaching approach found in alternative provision leads young people to internalise an acceptance that grown up, working life necessitates particular skills which can be developed through schooling. It can also be seen that once young peoples' voices had been heard and respected they tended to respond in kind by putting their effort and work into what had been arranged. The capital of future orientation although not necessary for habitation of the field, is clearly again at play and in development in the young adults' accounts above.

### **8.9 Aspiration**

Alternative provision schooling provides an environment in which young people often see staff as role models and for some this may even lead to a desire to pursue similar lines of work – being a part of the field of alternative provision and experiencing the support of staff can inspire young people to want to play a similar role for others in the future. This can obviously influence life choices moving forwards, in particular the navigation of training and education opportunities.

Only Charlotte and Nadia talked specifically in terms of their experiences in alternative provision developing their life and work aspirations. Charlotte had always known that she wanted to be a teacher but following her time in alternative provision she became aware that she wanted to work either in the role of a special educational needs coordinator or more generally with those who are “less able than others”. Nadia reflected from her experience that:

“seeing the impact they did have on me is kind of empowering. Like I’d like to be able to do that in the future, for other children”

She went on to say that looking back on the choices she had made in terms of education and career path she could see that she had ended up following the people she had looked up to when she was younger and referred to them as role



models.

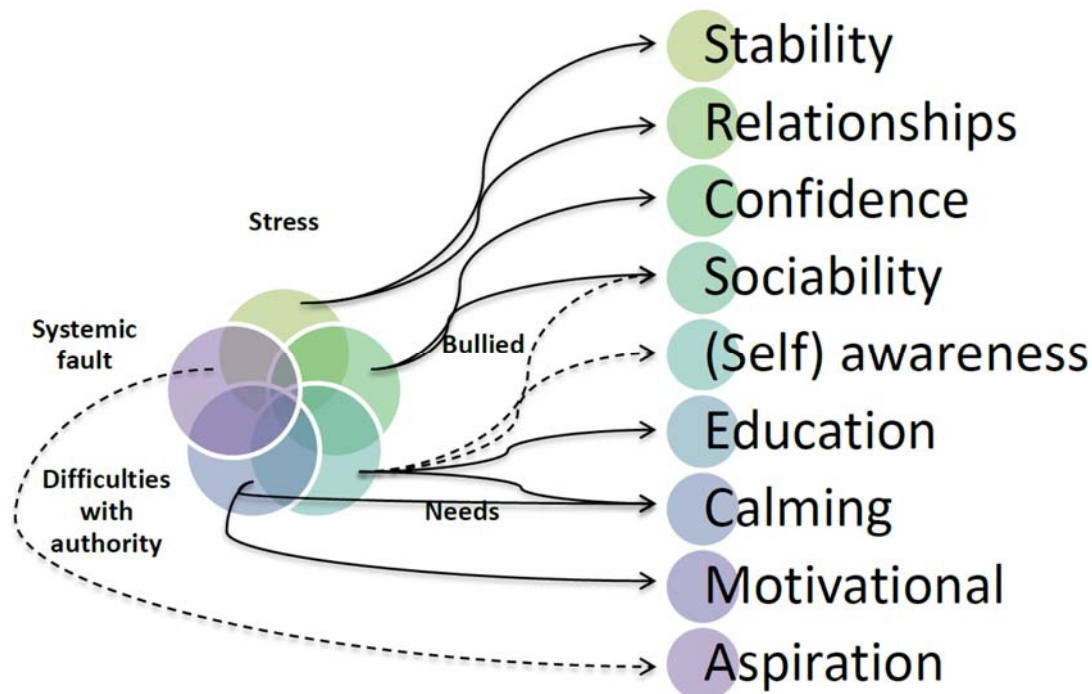
It can be seen from the two accounts above that alternative provision can provide aspirational influence for young people. This is not so easy to connect into the habitus developed in the field of alternative provision schooling as previous influences. It is however included as those who expressed this influence might not have been shaped in the directions they discussed without having come into contact with the field. This experience is thus more helpfully conceived as similar to what one would experience in moving into any new field – a developing awareness of new possibilities and new horizons for action. The aspiration influence is therefore somewhat similar to the awareness influence but more explicitly connected to the field itself as opposed to a general development of awareness of options, possibilities and horizons for action.

#### **8.10 Connecting pupil experience types to influences**

Having outlined both the types of experiences of pupils who end up marginalised and excluded from mainstream schooling and the range of successful influences alternative provision schooling can have upon them, it is now time to make some connections between the two. These connections are based on the analysis outlined in the methodology section above and are tentative because of the small sample size of this research project. It is however possible to say that in this sample there tended to be particular connections between types of experience and influences which, when connected into the fields of mainstream and alternative provision schooling, develop a coherent picture with significant potential relevance for similar situations elsewhere. Thus the model presented is likely to be recognisable, relevant and useful to practitioners working in and around the field of alternative provision schooling. The connections between experience types and influences made below are also tentative because of the frequent confluence between types of experience leading to alternative provision schooling and because the proposed model is a framework of ideas to be used to enhance understanding rather than predict 'at risk' young people.

The model should thus be held loosely, used where it is relevant and helpful and disregarded where it is not. It should not be used to pathologise young people singling them out for intervention. It should be used to shape the approach taken when working with any young person whose experiences match up to those outlined in the model. This use of the model allows for localised field dynamics and individual biographies (trajectories in the field) to be taken into account when responding to difficulties. This is highly important because, for example and as has been noted above, although pupils with SEN are excluded significantly more often than their peers the vast majority of pupils with SEN are supported within mainstream schooling. The model will now be introduced after which a number of the young adults' schooling trajectories will be considered and discussed in relation to the model.

Figure 8.2 – Types of experience and Trajectories model



In the model above the types of pupil experience are connected to influences of

alternative provision. Full arrows represent a confident connection, for example between young people whose stories align to the stress experience type and the importance of stability and relationships as influences of alternative provision. A dashed arrow represents a confidence that in at least some if not all cases the connection will exist as an important influence of alternative provision for the young person. It would of course be naïve to preclude the possibility that a young person whose experiences align to the difficulties with authority experience type could not experience influence on their sociability in alternative provision. This is not what is suggested by this model: it is simply that within the experiences of young adults which were considered in this research the connections laid out above were present, and when considered alongside the fields of mainstream and alternative provision schooling, exhibited a coherence which confirmed that it was appropriate to include them. These connections will now be considered using a number of the young adults' schooling trajectories as examples.

#### **8.10.1 Stress type experiences influenced in stability and relationships**

Nadia's dominant type of experience which led to her transition from mainstream schooling to alternative provision aligned to the stress experience type. It was after she was sexually assaulted, her family relationships broke down and she experienced transitions in and out of care that she was excluded from mainstream schooling. As is so often the case, particularly for children in care, Nadia's trajectory within the field of alternative provision was not simple; she attended a number of schools due to difficulties and care placement movements. The positive influence of alternative provision was found in her final placement which lasted throughout year eleven. The influences in Nadia's experience of alternative provision were: good relationships with teachers who were open; a relaxed environment where she felt she was given a chance; support when going through 'a really tough time'; an opportunity to have a bit of a social life at an otherwise lonely time; the opportunity to experience a structure of classes similar to mainstream schooling; and in aspiration from 'role

models' in terms of her career. The influences of stability and relationships are clearly dominant in Nadia's story with sociability and aspiration as sub-influences.

#### **8.10.2 Bullied type experiences influenced in confidence and sociability**

Carl experienced significant bullying in high school which led to his transition from mainstream to alternative provision schooling. His attendance dropped a lot in year eight and continued to fall into year ten, the school decided to put alternative provision schooling in place to try and reengage him. The influences Carl experienced at alternative provision were: friendly staff; boosted confidence; became less shy; a role model; significant encouragement. Confidence and Stability are clearly dominant influences in Carl's story. Interestingly there is a clear and strong motivational influence present too. Despite this, having considered the whole data set, the researcher is satisfied that within this data set confidence and sociability are the dominant influences connected to bullied type experiences.

#### **8.10.3 Needs type experiences influenced in education and calming and at times (self) awareness and sociability**

Kim did undergo bullying alongside experiences which aligned to the SEND experience type however it was the latter that were arguably the root experience which led to her transition from mainstream to alternative provision schooling. When she was in primary school she was assessed and given a statement for ADHD, Aspergers and Dyslexia. Once at high school things deteriorated, she was singled out and had to eat her lunch in the library and she experienced severe harassment leading to her forging sick notes and running away from school. Her mother's friend's son attended alternative provision and her mother worked with this provision and the school to get her moved there. The influences Kim experienced at alternative provision were: meeting 'really nice' people in a friendly atmosphere; becoming more willing to learn; support with gaining qualifications and getting into college; an awareness of her sometimes risky behaviour; opportunities to socialise more; help with getting

into voluntary work in an area of interest; and a changed attitude – she became less angry at the world. Education and calming influences are clearly present in Kim’s story as are the influences of sociability and (self) awareness. It is also possible to see a bit of a motivational influence in terms of becoming more open to learning, of wanting to learn. As with the bullying experience type trajectory above it is considered here that the important influences for the needs experience type are calming and education with sociability and (self) awareness as at times but not always present.

#### **8.10.4 Difficulties with authority type experiences influenced in calming and motivation**

Phil experienced a confluence of experience types having been diagnosed with ADHD as well as recounting many experiences which aligned to the difficulties with authority experience type. It was however clear that the difficulties with authority were what led to his exclusion and move into alternative provision. Phil was excluded from both primary and secondary mainstream schools. This was connected to being rude to and ‘back chatting’ teachers and he said of himself, “I think I’ve got problems with authoritative people”. Phil’s experience included returning unsuccessfully to mainstream school and again being excluded into alternative provision. Thus his reflections of influences are based on experiences at more than one alternative provision school. The influences Phil experienced at alternative provision were: becoming more engaged in work – “it’s not as boring as school so I stuck it out” – and understanding it’s relevance; teachers who were friendly and relaxed but still helped you learn things; opportunities to socialise and become more of a “mingly person”; and becoming calmer and less aggressive. Motivational and calming influences are clearly at play and dominate Phil’s story, there is also sociability involved in his account and he did appreciate gaining qualifications and being supported into college (education influence). As above with other trajectories and having considered the data set as a whole it is considered that the important influences for the difficulties with authority experience type in the cases considered are calming and motivational influences.

#### **8.10.5 Final reflections on the types of experience and influences model**

Having considered the trajectories and related influences for young people whose experiences reflect the stress, bullying, SEND and difficulties with authority experience types it is important to briefly say something about the systemic fault experience type. Charlotte was the only young adult whose experience clearly resonated with the systemic fault experience type. For her, alternative provision influenced her awareness and her aspirations. She reflected that she gained a lot in terms of 'social aspects' and framed her experience as a 'career boost' – she had wanted to be a teacher. However her experiences developed this into a desire to be an SENCO or to work with marginalised pupils. As such is it considered appropriate to include the systemic fault experience type, as one example is enough to show this can occur and also to make a tentative connection between this experience type and the (self) awareness influence. This influence connection is deemed appropriate because of the argued difference in field forces and dynamics between mainstream and alternative provision schooling. Moving from one to the other will predicate and arguably necessitate a shift in habitus which will in turn likely change the individual's perception of their context.

Given that the proposed model offers such a clear articulation of the different types of experience which lead to marginalisation and exclusion it is important to consider its relevance in situations which are not so clear cut. It is helpful to explore the relevance of the model in a situation where a young person's experience does not clearly align to any one experience type. In this research project it was only Paul whose experiences did not readily align to any of the particular types of experience. Paul clearly presented stressed behaviour which led to his exclusion from mainstream school. He experienced bullying in year eight but also bullied others, both at primary and secondary school. After his exclusion he was assessed as verging on ADHD and was put on a drug called Consatril which he never took and while he was still at mainstream had been supported in classes by someone from the PRU. Thus it is possible to see a mix

of all four experience types of experience in Paul's story. It is even possible to consider systemic fault to be in play as after his exclusion he was initially offered a managed move into another mainstream school which he turned down because of the school. However, considering the situation retrospectively it is likely that had a suitable mainstream place been found it may have been possible to support Paul into a new environment. Instead, after being excluded at the beginning of year nine he bounced around six alternative provision schools before moving into college which also didn't last and then onto other post-16 alternative placements.

Paul was shown an earlier model of the pupil experience types and identified himself as experiencing motivation and stress. Motivation in his account connected more to his time in alternative provision where he felt that he 'wanted to work' but found this difficult in the environment he was in. Stress connects to his experience of being moved from one primary school to another because his brother was being bullied and also seemed to connect to the transition from primary to secondary school. In reflecting on why he bullied others he suggested that it was because he didn't have any friends and that bullying people would be a way to 'get in with the cool people'. It is of course easy to suggest the following from a retrospective stance. However, had it been possible to understand Paul's experiences (as happened in his interview for this research) whilst he was still at school, or even once he was excluded, it may well have been possible to focus on a managed move rather than alternative provision placement.

The model outlined above recognises four recurrent types of experiences which lead to marginalisation and exclusion and provides the additional option of systemic fault for understanding situations. Each experience type connects to specific influences of alternative provision. It is recognised that other influences will at times play a part in the young person's story however there exist specific

influences which are a part of a positive trajectory for each of the pupil experience types. As in the story above, and in all the other accounts previously considered, a pupil who ends up marginalised and excluded from mainstream school may present either difficult to manage or disengaged behaviour (or a combination of the two) in relation to the field of mainstream schooling. What is important is to consider the kinds of experiences which have led to this confrontation or withdrawal and from this position to be able to begin to develop an idea of what the positive influence of alternative provision will likely include. This will enable a shaping and monitoring of the young person's trajectory through alternative provision and hopefully into a successful and empowered life beyond. A helpful analogy for these pupil types of experience and trajectories of alternative provision's influence is 'mini meta-narratives', overarching stories which can serve as an explanation for past experiences and provide an articulation of a positive end point of the current section of the story.

### **8.11 Life beyond AP – drivers of change post alternative provision**

Before concluding this chapter by reviewing the findings set out in this and the preceding two chapters one final aspect of findings will be discussed. As the research undertaken covered life after, as well as during, alternative provision it was also possible to reflect on a number of drivers of change as young people left the schooling system and moved into adult life: the passage of time, learning to take responsibility for oneself, relationship with a partner and parenthood stand out as important drivers of change for young people. Opportunities presented in further learning and work also provide fertile ground for driving positive change in the lives of the young people as they transition into adulthood.

#### **8.11.1 A turning point in a longer story**

Overall the relevant reflections for alternative provision is that it must be kept in mind that any young person is being met at one point in their lives and as well as having a back story which it is inherently important to understand they will also go on to write the story of the rest of their lives when they leave. This story



would be incredibly difficult to predict for any young person but is often remarkably influenced by their time in alternative provision. Below is just one additional example, to add to the many already given above, of one of these stories. This example, given by Sam in one of his interviews, relates to the experiences of a young person Sam knew from before his time in alternative provision:

“Well I got one of my friends before who, he was just an absolute nightmare, I mean kicked out of his house all the time and everything. Now, I think after going to Bowden he calmed down a lot, he’s non-stop working, before he was always saying he didn’t want to work and that.. Also it obviously goes with growing up but, I think obviously, I think that did help him as well”

The point is that it is likely that the fruit of this young person’s experience in alternative provision was not seen until they moved into adulthood where it was combined, the importance of which is noted above, with growing up in general. Thus both providers and any attempt to assess their success must consider an extended period of time, not just the initially available outcomes of any young person’s time in alternative provision. The influences outlined above do however provide an important resource in considering whether a young person’s experience in alternative provision is providing the beginnings of a positive trajectory. This can be the end of a chapter about their difficulties in schooling and the turning of a page to reveal an as yet unwritten future of which they have been empowered to become the author.

### **8.12 Final conclusions about findings**

This research project has produced a clear model of types of experience of pupils who become marginalised and excluded from mainstream schooling. These pupil experience types have been connected to specific ways in which alternative provision can be expected to influence them. This model is undergirded by a

thorough articulation of the fields of mainstream and alternative provision schooling. The next chapter will summarise this thesis before making recommendations as to the implications of these findings for practice, policy and research.

## **9 Recommendations and Conclusion**

Given the findings from this research it is pertinent to make a number of recommendations to different areas of policy and practice. These recommendations will be addressed towards alternative providers, mainstream schools, local authorities, central government, and researchers. They are not only informed by the research and findings covered in this thesis but also by the researcher's experience of working in and running an alternative provision school, of local authority governance as an elected councillor, as a school governor, and as a member of the management board of a pupil referral unit. Before setting out these recommendations it is helpful to list the findings of this thesis:

1. There exist clear differences between the approaches of mainstream and alternative provision schools. These two areas of schooling are therefore best conceived of as distinct fields with differing forces in play. As such the necessary habitus for existence in each field also differ as do the capital at play.
2. The nature of the field of mainstream schooling leads some pupils, whose experiences align to particular experience types, to become marginalised and excluded from the field. It is however incredibly important to note that many pupils whose experiences match up to these types of experience do not end up excluded from the field of mainstream schooling.
3. The nature of the field of alternative provision schooling is such that those who attend are influenced in particular ways. It is possible to connect these influences to the particular pupil experience types which are likely to lead to exclusion from the field of mainstream schooling. This however should be held somewhat loosely as the influences can reach outside of the specified trajectories.

These findings, and their development into a model of types of experience,

influence and support, have fed into the development of the recommendations listed below.

### **9.1 Alternative providers**

The provision of alternative schooling to young people who have been marginalised and excluded from the mainstream environment presents complex challenges. Policies aimed at as reducing permanent exclusions, and an overarching discourse of 'inclusion', variously defined, means that alternative provision can become marginalised and undervalued. Having worked in and seen the value of alternative provision first hand one of the key aims of the researcher in undertaking this professional doctorate was to help identify the value of alternative provision schooling and the positive impact it can have. More pragmatically, it has been argued that this form of schooling exists, (in fact, wherever schooling is formalised marginalisation and exclusion happens (Hayden and Blaya 2005, Gleeson 1992)), and that therefore it is helpful to think carefully about how to best conceptualise and practice in this context.

In this thesis it has been seen that alternative provision schooling is distinct from mainstream schooling and is a context in which young people can, where practice is effective, learn to embody particular dispositions. These align to the characteristics of success outlined in the findings. Confidence, sociability, calmness, self-awareness and motivation are the dispositions which young people develop and begin to embody in the field of alternative provision. It is an environment which can provide stability for those who have not previously experienced this and where relationships facilitate learning and formalised education.

The research has developed types of experience which correspond to particular trajectories of success:

- There are young people who have experienced significant stress in their lives. For these pupils the key is that alternative provision provides stability and a context in which they can form and experience positive relationships.
- There are young people who have experienced persistent bullying. For these young people alternative provision should focus on being a place where they can become confident in themselves and explore opportunities for socialising.
- There are young people who have (un)diagnosed SEND. For these young people alternative provision is a place where they can receive education which connects with them and their needs can be both understood and responded to resulting in becoming calm. It may also be the case that developing self-awareness and sociability is part of the trajectory for these young people.
- There are young people who have experienced difficulties with authority. For these young people alternative provision is a place where relationships are based on respect and mutuality, a successful trajectory in this instance will involve becoming calmer and increasingly motivated to engage.

*It is suggested that alternative providers could make use of this model of pupil experience types to help with understanding pupil's backgrounds and their probable trajectories for success.* This would not necessarily take the form of a formalised process (see below for suggestions regarding the measurement of success) but rather as a framework of ideas (akin to Weber's Ideal Types or Schutz's Typifications) which once internalised can provide helpful reference points for working in a challenging context with pupils who have experienced marginalisation and exclusion for a variety of reasons. This framework has the potential to play an important part in putting in place appropriate support and provision which will be effective.

This of course leads onto the question of measuring the effectiveness of provision and allows a move beyond concentrating on measures aligned to mainstream models of schooling, as exemplified by official statistics reported to the Department for Education. There are tools already in existence which are designed to measure attitudes, for example Pupil Attitude to School and Self (PASS), which could be used for this purpose. The researcher is not entirely adverse to this but would suggest that highly systematic approaches such as this miss qualitative detail and to some extent treat young people on similar terms to mainstream schooling. The focus of these packages is the ability to monitor and this is their goal. Metrics can easily become divorced from the young person's story and what success actually looks like for them. *It is suggested that alternative providers could use qualitative accounts informed by the types of experience and trajectories framework, allowing room to detail additional shocks and events, to monitor and evaluate the progress that young people make with in their provision. This would allow a rich and deep picture of each young person to be developed in which the focus would be the young person's progress.* This will often encompass knowledge that staff at alternative provision already have (see Thomson and Russell, 2009), but some formalisation of this knowledge would capture the effects of practice in alternative provision and place it on more equal footing with mainstream education, rather than having 'second class' status. Ultimately the use of the measures of success discussed by young adults who have experienced alternative provision would more closely represent the outcomes of alternative provision schooling which are not captured by academic qualifications. It must also be kept in mind, as considered in the previous chapter, that time in alternative provision may well be a 'turning point' (Hodkinson, 2008) in itself and success must therefore be considered longitudinally. The methods used in this study have also attested to the value of retrospective accounts.

There are two further recommendations which stem from the young adults

accounts. These concern qualifications and choice. Qualifications was one of the most prominent themes in the young adults accounts, as discussed above, and this reflects the importance placed upon qualifications as the outcome of formal schooling and some guarantee of entry into further study or employment. Many of the young adults were very pleased that they had gained qualifications at alternative provision that they would not have otherwise achieved. This had often been an important part of their overall story. However it was the case that alongside a necessary and helpful focus on the progression of each young person into college or training, it was at times the case that once this was in place qualifications had been dropped as a priority. Given the importance placed upon qualification in the wider educational context in which alternative provision exists, *It is recommended that, irrespective of having a route for progression in place, every young person in alternative provision should be supported to gain qualifications in appropriate subjects and at the level they are able to work to.* This leads onto a second aspect of qualifications which was developed in young adults accounts, that of qualifications at a suitable level. It was clear in talking to young adults who had attended alternative provision that many of them were highly able and intelligent and a number had gone on to university. Yet in some accounts they had not been offered qualifications at a suitable level (see also Russell and Thomson, 2011) with one young adult having opted out of alternative provision to teach themselves at home so as to pursue subjects in which they were interested and at an appropriate level. Therefore *it is recommended that providers must be willing to put in the extra effort it takes to be able to support higher ability pupils.* This will only be possible if recommendations regarding security of funding for alternative provision schooling are also followed, and if strategic decisions are made at the point where alternative provision is being set up or about the development of a setting .

The second area for recommendation, stemming from the young adults'

accounts relates to *choice*. It was clear from all the accounts included in this research that choice was key to alternative provision practice, as outlined above in the findings. *The recommendation would thus simply be for providers (and commissioners) to recognise the importance and potential of allowing and enabling young people to choose.* It has been noted by Russell and Thomson (2011) that young people and their families had little influence over the alternative provision offered to them, and other research has highlighted the way in which parents and carers feel marginalised by the exclusion process (Hayden and Dunne, 2001; Barnardo's Cymru and SNAP Cymru, 2011). Including choice as a part of any learning encourages active participation and enables young people to learn about their ability to influence their environment. Whatever form it takes, listening to young people's views and pursuing choice as fundamental to alternative provision schooling will encourage young people to reflect and lead to a deeper level of engagement – one of the key challenges when working with marginalised and excluded young people.

## **9.2 Mainstream schools**

This thesis recognises that the current model of mainstream schooling does not cater to all pupils, and that this may not always be possible or desirable. The following recommendations therefore involve consideration of how to use alternative provision schooling effectively and also whether there is anything that mainstream schools can learn from alternative provision practice and research.

It is suggested that mainstream schools could also make use of the model of pupil experience types and trajectories for success, again as a framework to aid understanding of what is happening when mainstream schooling is not working for a particular young person and to consider carefully what kind of support, perhaps alternative provision, should be put in place to best enable the young person to navigate the challenges they face and succeed in life. Using the framework outlined above for alternative providers is thought to be appropriate



for mainstream schools seeking to understand and support pupils who are becoming marginalised.

It is also considered appropriate to use the model of pupil experience types to consider whole school practice and approach. It is in this way that alternative provision can act as an avant-garde to mainstream schooling (see Chapter 5). Even though the thesis in part considers mainstream schooling to be inherently structured so as to provide little capacity for working outside the formulas and rules which enable the organisation to run, there are things that can work as can be seen in the young adults' accounts of their time in mainstream schooling. The ethos within individual schools and the teaching practice of individual members of staff are clearly important – thus, for example, Sam recounted a group in which he felt listened to by a senior teacher at the school, where there was both challenge and support. When asked about how mainstream schooling could be improved he came back to this and talked about listening to young people because 'it's their school too'.

As discussed in the findings not every young person with a statement of SEN, or who has been taken into local authority care, ends up marginalised and excluded from mainstream schooling. This means that one cannot simplistically intervene or base interventions on the pupil experience types model. It is however extremely worthwhile to reflect on each experience type and the reasons why some individuals who have had experiences which are identified in the model will end up marginalised and excluded from mainstream. This can lead into consideration of whether there are ways in which mainstream schooling could be approached differently so as to provide an environment which is better placed to hold and support all pupils. The following will consider each pupil experience type in turn and relate these experiences to mainstream approaches to schooling:

- For pupils whose marginalisation and exclusion from mainstream schooling revolves around experiences of stress it is helpful for school staff to think in these terms: *to work on identifying stress with the young person and on minimising stressful situations within school wherever possible*; and when this is not possible, to work on developing coping skills where system change cannot be effected and to consider appropriate social support, such as the use of CAF forms or support from a Virtual School.
- For pupils who have been marginalised and excluded through experiences of persistent bullying a first step is for a school to continually pursue a whole school anti-bullying strategy with energy. Keeping issues of bullying at the top of the school agenda has been shown to help maintain positive outcomes (Smith et al., 2003). In this research project it is of note that more young adults had experienced bullying as a part of their story – ten of the 18 – than those who had been in care, permanently excluded, or had a statement of SEN. This reflects figures produced by an Ipsos MORI, Youth Justice Board survey (Anderson et al., 2010) which recorded 14 per cent of truants as naming bullying as the main reason for their absence from school (see also Duckett et al., 2010 referred to above and McCluskey, 2008). It will perhaps make for uncomfortable reading that the young adults involved in this research essentially needed a break from their ingrained relationships and ways of being. This presents clear challenges to an inclusion agenda and responding in this way can clearly lead to the location of the problem with the young person experiencing the bullying. However, inclusion has a firmer grounding in rights than efficacy (Lindsay, 2007) and is perhaps better thought of as one educational principle among many (Clark et al., 1999). Given that, this research shows that moving context can be a highly positive experience for a young person and can provide an opportunity to start again and challenge beliefs that have been ingrained

by the experiences of bullying. *It is recommended that there are many interventions that can be attempted before considering a change of school for a young person but that the experience of others shows a change can be positive and effective.* A change of school would arguably be a better outcome than a pupil choosing to self-exclude and refuse schooling due to their experiences.

- For pupils whose experiences of SEND has led to their marginalisation and exclusion, there is much well-established advice, guidance and support available to schools in relation to caring for pupils with special educational or other needs. *Drawing on this as a first port of call* is the place where any school should start when attempting to support pupils experiencing these situations. And, as has been noted above, the majority of pupils with a statement of SEN are supported in mainstream schooling. It is those who end up in alternative provision schooling that are our concern. In this research, more than any other experience type, young adults whose experiences corresponded to the SEND experience type also reflected other experience types too. This was commonly experiences of stress. As such, it is considered that *the school responses set out above for stress experience types may well have a positive impact for SEND experience type pupils too.*
- Where pupils experience difficulties with authority leading to marginalisation and exclusion it was the experience of more equal and respectful relationships that made a difference in alternative provision. As such, *it is appropriate to consider how mainstream schools can embody respect within the system that is mainstream schooling, for example through such approaches as 'ethical caring' (Beck and Cassidy, 2009). Listening and treating young people's views as worth of consideration would be a good place to start,* and has been shown above in Sam's account to be effective in supporting pupils in school. This approach is also corroborated by those who experienced what has been

termed systemic faults. It was noted above that a significant part of the issue in each situation considered was that the voice of the young person had not been heard, leading to inappropriate or a lack of schooling.

Finally, figures provided to the researcher showed that around one in five young people in alternative provision schools are in care (see Chapter 2). It is not necessarily a surprise that some of the young people in our society who have had the most difficult and stressful start to life end up marginalised and excluded from mainstream schooling. However it is notable that around one in five young people in alternative provision are in local authority care. This is reflective of how quickly things can escalate within the schooling system as well as the care system. For young adults interviewed in this research project the two were often intertwined. It is recognised that in recent years significant effort has been put into addressing disaffection in education and the educational experiences of children in care. The role of virtual schools is key in this. *It is recommended that work is undertaken with and within schools to develop their understanding of care transitions, the effect that these have on young people and of strategies schools can use to support young people experiencing difficult change.*

Addressing this issue and finding ways to keep in place stability of schooling when home life is being turned upside down would be a great step forward for this group of young people. *It is also recommended that Virtual Schools should have a continuing focus on high expectations regarding opportunities and achievement for children in care.* This almost goes without saying, but recognising the nature of career paths and opportunities (see Chapter 3) underscores the importance of informal connections and relationships developed in this process (see also Driscoll, 2013).

### **9.3 Local authorities**

The findings from this thesis suggest that local authorities are in the best position to provide a level of quality assurance, holding alternative providers to account and providing helpful information to those commissioning alternative provision.

This is likely to be increasingly challenging in a policy context where the drive is to reduce local authority influence in the management of schools (Ball, 2013).

Local authorities are legally responsible for any pupil who has been excluded from mainstream schooling unless they are admitted into another school and placed onto that school's roll. This process is often called a 'managed move' and can either take place from one mainstream school to another or can be the route back into mainstream schooling from alternative provision. A local authority must provide full time education from day six of the exclusion. This is generally thought to be 25 hours a week, could be made up of more than one placement and could include home schooling with a tutor. There are also many pupils who have not been excluded from mainstream schooling who attend alternative provision schools. Despite this, it is thought that local authorities are still best placed to have a level of oversight, and even provide governance of, the alternative providers which serve their local area.

Alternative provision in any local area is a market and will, depending on one's economic philosophy, either be in need of a level of regulation to enable it to function effectively or, will find the most efficient solution to the problem (in this case the problem being the education of pupils marginalised and excluded from mainstream schooling) of its own accord via the guidance of Adam Smith's often quoted 'invisible hand'.

This may be a matter of ideology. It is however thought to be more helpful to proceed as follows. The commonality between the market philosophies mentioned above is that they both derive their ability to move a market towards best functioning from the information available to them. A market regulation framework will essentially view alternative provision as a system to be managed and will be in need of good information about the intricacies of this system so as to be able to spot the flaws and either manage them out or put in place a

solution to them. Alternatively, an ‘invisible hand’ perspective on the market of alternative provision will see the range of provision as the outworking of individual self-interest which will, of its own accord, find the most efficient and therefore best solution to the problem. The necessary prerequisite for this to be the case is that those already involved and those who may choose to be involved are in possession of good information about the market under consideration.

It is therefore considered to be the case that, whatever perspective one may hold on the underlying mechanisms for the function of alternative provision, in any local area it will be necessary for there to be clear, effective and consistent monitoring in place (as suggested by Thomson and Russell, 2009 and noted as absent by Gazeley, 2010). The local authority is best placed to undertake this role in possessing both current and historical information, and access to multi-agency sources and demographic information about the local education market. *It is recommended that this should include monitoring of the policies, practice, relevant statistics and outcomes of all providers serving the local area, the use made by mainstream schools of alternative provision in their area; and an overview of pupils who are either in alternative provision of any kind, or simply out of mainstream schooling.*

This level of information would support schools who are now required by Ofsted to report on their use of alternative provision and the quality of any off-site schooling which is provided to pupils on their roll. It would also help, as set out above, to facilitate a broad and appropriate range of alternative providers in the local area suitable to the local needs and wider environment (again Thomson and Russell, 2009). Equally, it should also make it possible to detect any marginalisation of specific social groups, for example Roma/Gypsy/Traveller pupils or young people in care.

#### **9.4 Central government**

Given the election of a Conservative majority government in May 2015, and so

long as the fixed term parliament act remains in place, the direction of travel for the next five years is likely to be towards both centralised and school based decision making and away from any local authority role in schooling (Ball, 2013). The role for central government cannot in this context be one of continual monitoring of individual schools under its responsibility as this would involve spreading resources far too thinly. *Its role is therefore to put in place structures which enable and encourage the development of solutions in any area.*

A related and recent example of this is the 'School Exclusion Trials'. Run by central government with a view to exploring the effect of placing the legal and financial burden of responsibility for any pupil who has been excluded upon the school which excludes. At first sight giving schools extra responsibility for those they exclude seems to have potential. Unfortunately the evaluation of the school exclusion trials was not able to find significant differences between trial and comparison schools. This was put down to the wider context of educational reform within which the trials took place (DfE, 2014). If the onus is to be placed upon schools to take responsibility for excluded pupils and to commission alternative provision it is thought that the argument in the preceding section still holds true. They will still be in need of information about the alternative providers and the market in general in their area to make good decisions. It is arguably also the case that local authorities are best placed to undertake this monitoring so as to avoid duplication of effort at the school level.

In this research the funding of alternative provision came through as an issue (see also, Thomson and Russell 2009). A structure which could be put in place by central government, which would solve the problem of flows of funding which can lead to the closure of alternative provision schools would be the expansion of the free school model for alternative provision schools. More than one young adult mentioned their alternative provision school closing overnight or without any forward planning. The autonomy built into the free school model could also

ameliorate the concerns laid out by Thomson and Russell (2009) regarding intensification of staff work and surveillance of young people. This is already happening on an ad hoc basis with PRUs converting to become AP Academies, local authorities setting up AP Free Schools and already existing alternative provision schools converting to become AP Free Schools. The benefit of alternative provision schools converting to AP Free School status is that they receive an £8000 base level of funding per pupil per year. This means that there is no longer such a significant shortfall of funding to run the business between one cohort of pupils leaving and the subsequent filling up of these places once more. The challenge of this comes with the smaller providers who are unlikely to be in a position to go through the fairly onerous process to convert to Alternative Provision Free School status. *It is therefore recommended that central government approaches local authorities to put in place a cooperative model by which existing alternative providers could be brought together into an Alternative Provision Free School which would allow for the provision of a base level of funding and consistent and appropriate monitoring to be put in place.*

Given the views of young adults included in this thesis and their experiences of what worked for them in terms of schooling it would be remiss to not include any recommendation about the school curriculum. It seems to be the case that it would be fruitful to include a wider range of subjects within the school curriculum, with a particular focus on practical learning and creativity. What is expected of schools is already somewhat overwhelming and thus the route through proposed here is *to consider the inclusion of elements of choice across the school curriculum from a much earlier age*. This would lessen the burden of all pupils having to learn all topics and would allow young people to pursue their interests from an earlier age thereby encouraging their engagement in their schooling. This recommendation is made because it was clearly the case that for many of the young adults and providers interviewed the ability for a young person to choose was fundamental to their reengagement with schooling (also in



Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993).

## **9.5 Researchers**

There are a number of specific recommendations made below which are related to findings in this research, deficits in the wider field of research and potentially fruitful sources of data relating to the field of research.

### **9.5.1 Findings in this research**

First and foremost *it is thought that the idea of alternative provision and mainstream schools as inherently different fields with related capitals and habitus is a potent one and that it could be used to develop future research in this area*. It is considered to be a particularly powerful tool for recognising and conceptualising the effects that this kind of schooling can have on a young person and, perhaps more importantly, how these effects are brought about.

It is considered appropriate to highlight the important role retrospective accounts played in this research. The strength of the findings lies in the level of reflection provided by young adults on the experiences of schooling (see Martin and Jackson, 2002 for another example of this). *It is therefore recommended that researchers should recognise the potency of retrospective accounts*.

Particularly when undertaking research with young people, especially those experiencing difficulties or who are hard to reach, and should seriously consider using this approach when planning research projects.

A number of the young adults interviewed had held misconceptions of what alternative provision schools would be like. These misconceptions related to this kind of schooling just being for those who are badly behaved. As has been seen from this research the reality on the ground is much more diverse. *It is therefore recommended that a research project could be undertaken with young people within alternative provision with one of the outcomes being to produce information sheets and perhaps even a few short videos which explain what*

*alternative provision is like and how it can help.* These could then be used with young people marginalised and excluded from mainstream schooling to prepare them for moving into an alternative provision school.

Another recommendation for further research relates to a specific account from the research and to the notion of learning to embody a certain habitus relevant to the field in which one is located so as to succeed. The account came from Sam and related to the situation which led to his exclusion from his mainstream secondary school in which he argued with his PE teacher and ‘went for him’ is considered on page 210. With the understanding of field and habitus discussed in this thesis it is possible to understand how any new teacher would be in the process of learning to embody certain dispositions which enable them to inhabit their position within the field successfully. It is thought that this process may be particularly prone to challenge when a new teacher comes into contact with a young person whose experiences align to the difficulties with authority experience type. *It is therefore recommended that an interesting and potentially fruitful research project to undertake would be the analysis of exclusion records to consider the characteristics of the staff member involved in any events which led to exclusion.*

*It is also suggested that more could be made by drawing further on similarities between progressive education and alternative provision to develop research projects for working with those marginalised and excluded from mainstream education.* Focusing in on democratic approaches, choice, creativity and the intrinsic value of learning would no doubt provide a plethora of interesting findings if explored with young people excluded and marginalised from mainstream schooling.

A final recommendation for future research is to consider further the nature of the dispositions internalised in schooling. For mainstream schooling to function

pupils need to embody insignificance and inferiority. It is thought that this may well be detrimental to working class young people entering the labour market, where there is a need to embody confidence and 'soft' people skills. *It would be informative to compare the trajectories of young people who have attended alternative provision (where the hypothesis is that internalised dispositions differ) with a matched sample of those who have attended mainstream schooling.*

#### **9.5.2 Wider research gaps**

There exists little to no literature about the schooling of pupils with 'medical needs'. In particular, it was not possible to find any research on the intersection of 'medical needs' and alternative provision. Given that pupils with 'medical needs' are one of the groups recognised as accessing alternative provision (DCSF 2008) there is a need to redress this deficit. *It is therefore recommended that research is undertaken to scope the nature of alternative provision undertaken with pupils with 'medical needs'.* To better understand the nature of the provision in place for them and the scale of this practice.

Even though the government undertakes an annual AP census there is a lack of data published on these schools. Any data that is published is part of wider reports. *It is therefore recommended that by using freedom of information requests data could be collected on a range of topics broader than that which is currently published. This could then be collated together with other available data on an annual basis and released as an annual report on alternative provision.*

It was noted above that a number of additional sources of information might be used to enhance the picture of alternative provision schooling and its effectiveness. The first of these would be to consider the use of pupil premium funding for alternative provision schooling. As suggested above, this is more often used for school rather than pupil level interventions but given the

prevalence of children in care in alternative provision and the level of pupil premium funding they attract annually (currently £1900) there is sufficient basis for the consideration of connections between this funding and the purchase of alternative provision. Further to this the most recent government guidance on alternative provision suggests that pupil's views on the provision should be collected upon their re-integration and that destinations of attendees should be recorded. This information would make for interesting reading and may well improve the research community's understanding of alternative provision schooling.

## **9.6 Conclusion**

The aim of this thesis was to explore the nature of alternative provision schooling and its effect on the young adults who attend. In developing mainstream and alternative provision schooling as two distinct fields with related habitus and capital it is hoped that the available literature on alternative provision has been enhanced. The work included on types of pupil experience and trajectories for success is modelled on the experiences of the young adults interviewed in this research. As such it presents a number of possible stories/experiences which professionals working in this field and young people marginalised and excluded from mainstream schooling would almost certainly recognise. So, although it is not possible to extrapolate from the accounts, the strength of the models included in this thesis lies in their relevance to professionals and their inherent recognisability. Given this, the work undertaken for this research project is considered to comprehensively answer the questions set out at the beginning of this process, and in so doing, to provide contribution to knowledge in this field of learning, a contribution which I hope has the potential to generate new insights concerning education for pupils out of mainstream schooling for many years to come.

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## Appendix 1: timeline examples

TIMELINE OF PLACEMENTS AND EVENTS	DAY TO DAY EXPERIENCE
Difficulties began in junior school in year six, another girl bullied her and turned her friends against her. This girl was meant to be going to a different high school but then turned up on the first day	<i>"there was a girl there, and, for whatever reason she didn't like me, and um, she, well she obviously bullied me, but it wasn't ever physical. What she done was, all the other girls I was friends with, she got them to join in on what she was doing"</i>
Throughout years seven eight and nine didn't attend a lot of school because of the bullying. The girl got expelled around year eight but here friends just carried it on	<i>"I didn't have a lot of time in school because of her. I think in year, year 8 she got expelled for breaking someone's fingers, I think it was that, not sure, but once she'd left, the other girls that were friends with her, just carried on what she was doing, and then, um, in year nine I had quite bad anxiety by then"</i>
Developed bad anxiety in year nine. They used to tell her she smelt so she took extra shirts into school and change in her breaks. Also got to the point where she didn't want to go outside or see anyone	<i>"I remember my form tutor saying to me that if I didn't go to school my mum was going to get in trouble and everything else. And I think that was shortly before my mum found out what was going on"</i>
At around this time mum found out and took her out of school. Had to go back in for an interview with the head and an educational psychologist, they said she couldn't go back into mainstream because of her anxiety	<i>"So I used to wash my shirts while she was at work and then take them into school the next day with me and I think she was on holiday or something and then she found out"</i>
Started attending the mentoring suite within the school, had to arrive after everyone else and work was sent down. This lasted for about a year and during this time she started seeing a CAMHS psychologist in school who suggested she attend Church End	<i>"There was always a chance that they were going to come in, so I was still, it wasn't any better at all ... people used to come in during break and use the computer, and sometimes it could have been those, I don't think it ever was but constantly running through my mind it was"</i>
She started by attending afternoons and gradually built up her confidence until she asked to go full time, this lasted for the next year and a half until the end of high school	<i>"they would send down books and they'd say do questions one to ten and I'd do that and they'd mark it, and that's it. And then they'd send down another book"</i>
Didn't want to go to college as would be back with the same people so started looking for a job, was unemployed for about a year	<i>"my anxiety got better, I was friends with everyone there, yeah it was really good"</i>
Got an office job with Sunnyside Motoring, used to do the accounts and they paid for her to do an evening course in book keeping and accounts	<i>"It gave me a lot of confidence, and, it also gave me confidence because they didn't say what the other people said so I kind of knew it weren't true then. Cos otherwise they'd be saying it as well"</i>
Went and worked at a supermarket cleaning firm as a supervisor for about a year and a half before being promoted to being a manager but was having to commute to Morden so looked for something closer to home	<i>"It actually gave you a chance to get interested, like with the English lit and on Tuesdays after... or Thursday afternoon if you only done that for an hour it would, I, I would have found it difficult to, I don't know, maybe understand, and then sort of take it in and then because we spent so long on it in the afternoon it was easier for me"</i>
Got a job with Serve, initially selling tickets on the bus at Ferndale this lasted two years before doing the training to become a bus driver which she passed February last year	<i>"my art teacher, she used to, I don't know, she used to like take you, she'd bring her camera in and she'd let you do what you wanted. Whereas, um, in obviously mainstream you wouldn't be able to do that, and um, I remember, my GCSE art project thing was a bit, well strange, [laughs] but, um, I made like a huge eye ball, and the interest that she showed in me doing it, was sort of like a, it was good"</i>
Currently employed full time as a bus driver, living at home with mum, getting married in September	<i>"If I didn't go there then I wouldn't have my GCSEs, wouldn't be as confident as I am now, I'm not life of the party or anything but I couldn't speak to people before so, and, I made friends there so it sort of changed my way of thinking. Like I used to think, no one likes me, things like that, but then when I went there, no one knew anything because they don't tell. They said unless you want to tell them we won't say anything and I didn't and because they didn't know anything it was just sort of like a fresh start, and it was good, it was good"</i>
	<i>"my boss suggested to me about getting the qualification because he said well you can do it but if you leave, you haven't got anything to say that you can. So that's why I went for it"</i>

## TIMELINE OF PLACEMENTS AND EVENTS

Always lived with his Nan because his mum's in the fire brigade and has a lot of shift work, mum lives with her husband in another area of town

Went to Sage Hill primary school but presented difficult behaviour and was kicked out

Moved into Moreton but got kicked out at the end of year five

At one of these two primary schools was diagnosed with ADHD

Home tutoring was put in place for year six but this broke down after a while

Went to Hilltop High School but was kicked out in year seven

After this he went to Fresh Training four days a week and PLH one day a week. Didn't like Fresh Training so asked to be at PLH full time, once this was in place he stayed until the end of year nine.

During his time at PLH he was put on Consatril, a tablet for his ADHD, and stayed on this until the end of Bowden

Went to New Springs in year ten but got kicked out for back chatting teachers within the year

Went to Bowden until the end of year eleven, whilst in year eleven also attended Fairfax and did a construction course

Went to college and did a one year construction multi skills course got kicked off it but still got the qualification

Then went on to do a public service level two course but got kicked off a week before the end of the course for taking a crate of drinks out of the café (not to steal just for fun). Was allowed to come in to finish the course and got the qualification

Worked at Argos from the August before the public services course through to the January Christmas work) and then got some temp work in warehouses

Did some volunteering at the red cross to put something else on his CV

Worked for a bit for a self-employed DIY person his dad knows but lost the job because the only transport he had was a moped so he kept being late

Currently living with Nan and trying to find work, has tried applying to the army but has to have been off the consatril for three years before he is able to apply

## DAY TO DAY EXPERIENCE

*"I mean there was a lot of arguments and stuff because of school and me getting kicked out and stuff like that but generally I was always good at home"*

*"so I was quite hyperactive and the teachers didn't really know how to deal with it ... I was never like a violent person I was just quite rude to the teachers all the time and giving them backchat. Um, that got me kicked out of Sage Hill"*

*"I was out of school quite a lot when I was younger cos they always used to send me home rather than keep me in"*

*"After a while they sussed out that I was a troublesome student they put me into the connexions, they ... just talked to me about how I should change, how I should, how I'm acting and stuff rather than trying to find a way to help me they tried to stop me from being the way I am"*

*"connexions told me that practical would be good thing for me but they didn't actually do shit all about it but then PLH were the one that actually done something"*

*"I think I've got problems with authoritative people"*

*"I hated, I absolutely hated school ... Teachers, I absolutely hated every single teacher that there was, apart, there was always like one or two though that were alright"*

*"I kept bunking off school and they put me in isolation and I ended up bunking off isolation, ended up kicked out of Hill Top"*

*"I'd start off with the good kids and then I'd figure out they were boring and all the bad kids were obviously the more fun ones and then I'd end up following them and end up being worse than them and being kicked out"*

*"I was pleased that I got kicked out of school so I didn't have to go any more, um, but after a while ... before I got, knew PLH, started to get a bit boring at home and then PLH came into it and I thought ah this is alright, um, then I just, it's fun, it's not as boring as school so I stuck it out"*

*"it seemed pointless and boring to me, cos all we were doing was like mock tests and researching from books and I didn't like that at all" [Fresh Training]*

*"I enjoyed it there cos they're not teachers as such they're more like, friends, and then yeah, but they are still teaching you stuff without making it this disciplined"*

*"being at PLH and stuff like that in general just made me more of like a, a mingly person, because through school, because I spent so much time at home I wasn't very like, I'm still not very ... sociable, I'm not very sociable still but I've got a lot better since school ... I was the most unsociable kid going through school ... it was mainly just talking to people, I was ju... I was very quiet"*

*"you gotta make me see from my own point of view why this bit of work, this bit of paper and all this writing on it is going to help me get a job rather than telling me it's going to do it. Cos then I want to do it myself if I see what it's going to do"*

*"it is a lot more intimidating at a mainstream environment"*

*"through school I was quite energetic and like aggressive and then I went through PLH, that calmed me down a bit more and then school, I was more or less the same but I was less aggressive and hyper. And then I went to Bowden which calmed me down a lot more and then College, like I said was just one dumb stupid thing that I done"*

*"Orchard is like, cos it's a smaller building, it's not as crowded ... so there's not really any distractions in classes um, teachers are more, um, willing to have banter with students ... there's more freedom ... there's no, no school uniform either which makes you feel more, I don't know, like comfortable"*

*"I only just pretty much started going out properly when I started going Bowden ... I never used to go out at all, as I said I used to be very unsociable"*


*"Bowden has taught me pretty much the same stuff that I need to know just to get me by in life whilst putting in some fun stuff"*

*"I'd rather have the ability to get by and develop from that in general life rather than get taught all of it at one short stage, I'd rather learn it all gradually as I go on"*

*"I just want to make money, have fun, that's it"*



## Appendix 2: difficulties and change examples

<i>Nature of acting out</i>	Nadia	<i>Changes because of alternative provision</i>
<p>That lasted two days, on my second day I was kicked out cos <b>I was smoking weed in the toilet with two other people</b></p> <p>I was a bit, I was really quiet but then I was really easily agitated like with the teachers. <b>I had no respect for teachers or anything like that</b></p> <p>I think it was literally just to social, I was just putting on a massive front for people and just being really naughty, and destructive and <b>I'd walk out of school</b></p> <p><i>Reasons for acting out</i></p> <p>so then I moved to Hawkhead in, I think, my first, when I was in year nine and something happened with my family and <b>I had a complete break, like family breakdown and I went into foster care</b> and stuff and then that's just, I was really really naughty from then in year nine</p> <p>it was very like, mis matched, like it was one minute I was with my mum, one minute I was in care, and then ... <b>during the summer holidays, they put me into care</b>, yeah, when I was in year ten it was the first couple of weeks I was really like.. The end of year nine the beginning of year ten it was just, I was reall.. like during the summer and stuff <b>I got really really naughty and they just couldn't control me at all</b></p> <p>there was nothing really to work hard for</p> <p><i>Reasons for AP</i></p> <p>I got really really naughty and <b>they just couldn't control me at all. So they decided to just get rid of me, exclude me</b></p>		<p>I do think the Bowden centre definitely helped me because <b>just being around people and like building relationships</b> with my students and stuff and seeing the impact they did have on me is kind of empowering. Like I'd like to be able to do that in the future, for other children, so,</p> <p>I can just imagine my life if I didn't go there.. Cos I was really easily influenced I think that I wouldn't.. <b>Going to the Bowden centre did have a massive positive impact on my life, if I didn't go I don't know what route I would have gone down</b></p> <p>with alternative provision they do, I know with the Bowden centre, the other ones didn't give me much of a chance but <b>the Bowden centre, they gave me a chance and that was just all I needed.</b></p> <p><i>Negative life experience after alternative provision</i></p> <p><b>also I was in a domestic violence relationship</b> with my sons at quite a young, like I was 16 till 19, <b>I went through three years of it</b>, with my son Jonathan's dad and just, because I didn't have any help at all</p> <p><i>Reasons for personal change</i></p> <p>It wasn't just the Bowden centre though, <b>it was also being pregnant</b> at the same, like at that time, if.. <b>I say myself Jonathan saved my life because if I wasn't pregnant with him I don't know what route I would have gone down to and I probably wouldn't be alive today</b></p> <p><b>I decided to go and do an access course</b> because I just wanted a job that was based around my kids so I can be there for my children. So, let me do psychology, I did access to psychology and <b>then I got into uni</b></p>

### Nature of acting out

Sam

I got to about year four, started, just started off just a bit like, you know, **cheeky sort of thing at first and then err just got worse** and the I got um, I didn't get to do my SATs, so kicked out of school then to do my SATs and I um, got a home tutor.

**Just constant arguing with most male teachers**, not really the female teachers, um, male teachers really, I got on with most of the female teachers

Yeah, it was, I um, **the PE teacher, um, just started arguing, and then I went for him**

### Reasons for acting out

I normally clashed with, I think it's normally male authority figures some err, some **teachers used to think they had to be right in control** even when you got a female teacher they wanna..

when you're a bit young you just muck around, running around the playground care free, you don't really, nothing bothers you. **Then you start hanging around with people** just, I don't think it was really anything bad at that point ... it all just progressed from there really.

he was quite a young, quite a young teacher and I think he, he was still trying a, decide what sort of way he was going to teach sort of thing. And err, he tried screaming and shouting and it just, laugh at him, like, what you think you're going to gain out of that mate, **you ain't going to get nothing from shouting at me.**

### Reasons for AP

primary school, um, which was alright I suppose until I got to about year four ... I didn't get to do my SATs, so **kicked out of school** then to do my SATs and I um, got a home tutor ... when I went to high school I wasn't allowed in with the rest of the kids at first ... I wasn't allowed to join until two weeks after everybody else ... **I got kicked out of there year nine**

### Changes because of alternative provision

if you had an argument with someone you couldn't go off somewhere and ignore them for the rest of the day so you sort of had to make up sort of thing as well

I think the way they handled us differently to the other schools, **it sort of showed you different way**, like you could just take a second, instead of just exploding straight away ... **take a second, calm down and then answer**, or if you really don't want to you don't have to stay there and confront it you could just walk away ... **you don't have to stay and fight your corner all the time. You can walk away from it**

No, well I think they, **they make you realise** a bit more that, that **some of the work you have to do, obviously it does help you out**, um, and they're not, they're not just doing it cos they feel like it sort of thing. They actually, they're there trying to help you cos they want you to do good in life basically like um.. **So the stuff they are teaching you is for a reason**,

I'm a bit more **patient and calmer**

it did really, just **made me more of a mellow person, more calm**

### Negative life experience after alternative provision

I had about **six months where I had no work**, um, which was **pretty shit to be honest**, I was signing on and basically bumming around doing nothing cos you get used to kind of not waking up early, staying in bed late, staving up later. doing nothing really

### Reasons for personal change

and obviously **since I had the little one I've made sure I've had work** all the time because **it's not just money for myself now** just **looking to try and get a flat now with me other half**



### Appendix 3: Survey used with providers

*There is a need to recognise the valuable role that alternative education provision fulfils, and to consider the lessons that can be learned from this. This questionnaire aims to find out more about teaching practice in alternative provision, and the kind of values that underpin this.*

*As someone who has worked in alternative provision I understand that your time may be stretched by other priorities. It is intended that participating in this research will be beneficial to alternative providers and ultimately to the young people who attend across this area and beyond.*

*It should take around 30mins to complete the questions below.*

#### About you:

1. Your name (this will not be included in any reports etc):

.....  
.....

2. Title of your position:

.....  
.....

3. What previous experience do you have which you bring to this role?

.....  
.....  
.....

4. How long have you been managing this alternative provision?

- ☐ Less than 6 months
- ☐ Between 6 months and a year
- ☐ Between one and three years
- ☐ Between three and five years
- ☐ Over five years

5. How long have you worked in alternative provision?

- ☐ Less than 6 months
- ☐ Between 6 months and a year
- ☐ Between one and three years
- ☐ Between three and five years
- ☐ Between five and ten years
- ☐ Over ten years

6. For how long has this provision been in place?

- ☐ Less than one year
- ☐ Between One and three years
- ☐ Three to five years
- ☐ Five to ten years
- ☐ Ten years plus

7. Why did you set up this provision / choose to work in this area?

.....

.....

.....

8. What keeps you working in alternative education provision?

.....

.....

.....

**About your provision:**

9. The name of your alternative education provision (again this will not be included in any reports etc):

.....

.....

10. Which subject(/s)/activities are available at your provision?

- ☐ Sport
- ☐ Art
- ☐ Mechanics
- ☐ English
- ☐ Maths
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Catering / cooking
- ☐ IT (Information technology)
- ☐ PSHE / Citizenship
- ☐ Design technology
- ☐ Humanities (History, Geography, R.E.)
- ☐ Other (please state)

.....

.....

.....

11. What qualifications are available at your provision?

- ☐ GCSE's
- ☐ Entry Level Certificates
- ☐ ASDAN
- ☐ Btec
- ☐ AQA units
- ☐ Adult Learning (Adult Literacy / Adult Numeracy)
- ☐ Other, please state:

.....  
.....  
.....

12. Once pupils are placed with you they stay until school leaving age (16 years old):

- ☐ Always true (~100%)
- ☐ Mostly true (~75%)
- ☐ About as true as untrue (~50%)
- ☐ Mostly untrue (~25%)
- ☐ Never true (~0%)

13. Do pupils attend:

- ☐ All full time
- ☐ Mostly full time
- ☐ About as many full time as part time
- ☐ Mostly part time
- ☐ All part time

14. If you have part time students what are the reasons for this, please tick all that apply:

- ☐ Level of funding available only allows for part time attendance
- ☐ better solution to attend another provision in addition to our provision
- ☐ better solution to attend mainstream in addition to our provision
- ☐ hope of reinstating full time at mainstream
- ☐ Our provision is used as a supplement to mainstream
- ☐ Limited space available in the centre so can only offer part time
- ☐ Pupil may not be able to access full time provision (plan to build up)
- ☐ Respite from mainstream for a fixed term
- ☐ Other, please state:

.....  
.....

15. What age pupils do you cater for?

- ☐ KS2
- ☐ KS3
- ☐ KS4
- ☐ KS5

16. Is the age range you cater for changing in relation to the 14 – 19 agenda or any other national / local changes?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, If so, how is it changing:

.....  
.....  
.....

17. Do those who place pupils at your provision attend meetings and ask for reports, etc?

- ☐ All Highly involved
- ☐ Most involved
- ☐ About half involved
- ☐ Most not involved
- ☐ No involvement at all

18. Do those who place pupils at your provision share relevant information (risk assessments, reports, etc)

- ☐ Always true
- ☐ Somewhat true
- ☐ Neither true or false
- ☐ Somewhat false
- ☐ Always false



19. What needs / difficulties do the young people who attend your provision have?

- ☐ ADHD
- ☐ Autism
- ☐ Medical needs
- ☐ EBD
- ☐ School refusers
- ☐ Aspergers
- ☐ Pregnant school girls
- ☐ Young mums
- ☐ Permanently excluded for a one off serious incident
- ☐ Specific learning difficulties, please specify examples:

.....

.....

- ☐ Other, please state:

.....

.....

20. What is the maximum number of students in a group when lessons take place, does this vary by subject / activity

.....

.....

.....

21. How many staff would you have with each group?

.....

.....

.....

22. Do you have policy documents publicly available on your website

☐ Yes

☐ No

23. What are the three most frequently used forms / policies / procedures in your centre?

.....

.....

.....

24. Over the last year, how many times have students been restrained when endangering themselves or others?

.....  
.....  
.....

25. If students are posing a significant danger to themselves or others are the police called? If so, how many times over the last year has this happened?

.....  
.....  
.....

26. If two students are fighting do staff intervene?

.....  
.....  
.....

27. Over the last year, how many students have been either excluded from your provision or moved onto another provision?

.....  
.....  
.....

28. Students are able to input into and influence what they will be learning over the coming month / term / year

- ☐ Always true
- ☐ Somewhat true
- ☐ Neither true or false
- ☐ Somewhat false
- ☐ Always false

29. Is it possible for students to choose the subjects / activities they take part in?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes

30. Are there lessons / subjects that are required at your provision?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, if so please state:

.....  
.....  
.....

31. Do students have a key worker?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

32. Students will be supported on a one to one basis rather than in groups if they need this

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes (if resources / staffing allows)
- ☐ Sometimes (other, please state)

.....

33. Students leave our centre with a clear plan set out for them (education, employment, training)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes

If no or sometimes, please elaborate:

.....  
.....

34. Do you follow up / keep track of students who have left your provision?

.....  
.....  
.....

35. When appropriate students at the centre are given a say in decision making (for example, how to decorate the centre, new subjects to study, trips / visits to be undertaken, etc)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please give example(s)

.....  
.....  
.....

36. Do students call staff by their first names at your provision?

- ☐ Always true
- ☐ Somewhat true
- ☐ Neither true or false
- ☐ Somewhat false
- ☐ Always false

37. In what ways do you work with other agencies to support your students, please tick all that apply:

- ☐ Attend 'Looked After Child' / 'Child in Care' reviews
- ☐ Complete 'Common Assessment Framework' forms
- ☐ Attend meetings with CAMHS
- ☐ Organise group work sessions / mentoring with outside agencies
- ☐ Attend 'Multi Agency Family Support Panel' meetings
- ☐ Attend / organise 'Team around the Child' meetings
- ☐ Liaise with evening youth provision to support students (Cadets, Youth Clubs, etc)
- ☐ Attend / organise Statement reviews
- ☐ Attend mainstream school strategy meetings
- ☐ Other, please state:

.....  
.....  
.....

38. Under what circumstances is financial (money or resources – clothing, bus ticket, food, etc) support offered to students when they are in need? Tick all that apply:

- ☐ If there is not becoming a pattern to their behaviour (asking for money regularly, or on a specific day)
- ☐ If it is judged to be helpful or necessary
- ☐ If staff decide to fund it out of their own pocket
- ☐ If there is money in the budget
- ☐ Other, please state:

.....  
.....  
.....

39. Regarding the previous question, what support is offered to students?

- ☐ Clothing
- ☐ Bus Tickets
- ☐ Food
- ☐ Toiletries
- ☐ Other, please state:

.....  
.....  
.....

40. Do you have to deal with damage / theft / drug use at your provision?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If so please give an example of how:

.....  
.....  
.....

**Attitude based questions**

41. It is important that students feel safe at our provision.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

42. There is a consensus across the staff group that so long as they are not a danger to themselves or others, or a detriment to their or others learning, it is acceptable to let students move around / wander

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

43. There is a consensus across the staff group that it is good practice to use appropriate positive touch (pats, hugs, etc) when interacting with students

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

44. Students are supported in working on subjects and topics that interest them as far as this is possible

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

45. If a student is responding to stress in a physical manner (hitting things, breaking things, etc), as long as they are not a danger to themselves or others, it is helpful to give them the time and space to work through things in this way

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

46. It is important that students know who is in charge, that there is clear leadership and structure

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

47. There is a consensus across the staff group that it is important not to use patronising language or authoritarian stances

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

48. If restraint is used it is important to do so sparingly and to avoid it becoming an ingrained behaviour at the provision

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

49. It is important that we are able to respond to any student's emotions or response no matter what time of the school day it is

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

50. Part of what we do is to ensure that as far as possible students develop meaningful and therapeutic relationships with staff

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

51. If a student needs it they should be allowed time and space to reflect on any difficulties (whether at the provision or outside) rather than having to attend whichever session is planned

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

52. There is a consensus across the staff group that members of staff will apologise to students when or if they have done something wrong which has impacted the student

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

53. There should be a respectful relationship both ways between staff and students, however staff will at times need to be patient with students and willing to forgive their inappropriate behaviour

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

54. Students should be able to input into planning topics they will be studying in a particular subject

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

55. It is important that students have routes into further study, an apprenticeship or work when they move on from the centre

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

56. It is important that what we do helps pupils to return to mainstream school

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree



57. In your opinion what are your top three priorities for things students learn at your provision that are not on the timetable – please tick 3:

- ☐ Patience
- ☐ Kindness
- ☐ Skills for work (employability)
- ☐ A work ethic (sticking at tasks / working well)
- ☐ Creativity
- ☐ An interest in learning
- ☐ The ability to listen to others views
- ☐ To fit in to society
- ☐ To be a good citizen
- ☐ Other please state:

.....  
.....

58. There is a consensus across the staff group that although participation in lessons is good, there are other things students learn just by being present in the provision

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

59. It is important to be flexible about how and when pupils engage with learning

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

60. It is helpful if staff share with students the challenges / difficulties they face in their own lives (so long as this is appropriate)

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

61. It is helpful for students to be able to question why they are learning about particular topics and to find convincing answers to this questions

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

62. It is unhelpful for staff to be authoritarian in their general approach to students (i.e. You must do this because I say so...)

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

63. It is important to have equal and respectful relationships between staff and students

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

64. Working in small groups is essential for the students we cater for

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

65. It is beneficial for students to experience the social situations afforded by trips / visits

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

66. It is important that students have the opportunity to try out different types of relationships in a safe setting at our provision (child to adult, adult to adult, employee to employer, etc)

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

**Questions about situations:**

67. In what circumstances would you not accept a pupil?

.....

.....

.....

68. What would you do if you realised a student had been inappropriately placed at your provision?

.....

.....

.....

69. How would you respond / what would you do if a negative relationship was emerging between a student and a staff member (assume the staff member has broken no policies)?

.....

.....

.....

70. Do you challenge students when they hold unacceptable beliefs / values (racist / sexist / to work, employment or training)?

.....

.....

.....

71. What are the key issues for students coming to your provision?

.....

.....

.....

72. How does attending your provision help students as they move beyond compulsory education and into the world of further education, training and employment?

.....  
.....  
.....

73. What does your provision offer to students that mainstream education cannot?

.....  
.....  
.....

74. How do you deal with and support your staff team through the challenges and difficulties they experience in their roles?

.....  
.....  
.....

75. Are there any particular models or theories of learning that you draw on at your provision?

.....  
.....  
.....

76. Would you be willing for me to get in touch with you in relation to further participation in this research?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, is so when is a good time to contact you:

.....

## Appendix 4: Outline interview structure used with young adults

- topics they don't want to discuss they are under no compulsion to do so
- duty to disclose
- ask whether they mind the interview being recorded

A brief introduction will be given – I want to talk about going to alternative provision, what that was like, what you have done since leaving (further courses or education, jobs, hobbies, experiences), where you are now and if you think you time at alternative provision has had anything to do with any of the above.

- To begin, can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
  - Where you live                      - Who you live with      - Family situation
- Going to alternative provision:
  - Why did you go to AP?
    - educational history – primary and secondary school
    - how well the young adult got on with teachers/other young people
    - experience of learning
  - Where did you go?
    - Did you understand why you had to go
    - how did you feel about going
  - How long were you there?
  - What was it like?
    - how was it different/the same to previous schooling?
  - Do you remember what the average day was like?
  - What were the staff like?
    - did you get on with any particular teachers?
    - If there were some you liked, what was good about them
    - what were the problems with those you didn't like
    - any examples of good/bad teaching
  - How did you feel about the lessons there?
    - curriculum/ability to take qualifications and whether they did any/lessons liked/disliked and why
    - access to extra-curricular activities
    - What did you learn at AP and what has been useful?
  - How did the AP prepare you for moving on – reintegration into another school or college/careers advice etc
- What have you done since leaving:
  - What happened next
    - further courses or education?
    - did the AP you were at or someone else help with this?
    - Did you keep in touch with the AP?

- Have you worked? – formally, informally?...
  - Hobbies / Experiences?
    - What did you do in you free time while you were at AP
    - has this changed since then? How?
- Where are you now, what are you doing?
  - Has AP influenced this in any way
  - What do you remember about AP – is there anything you still think about from that time in your life?
  - Did AP give you skills for any employment you have had? What were these?
- Would you recommend AP for a pupil (adapt to use family situation) struggling in mainstream? Why?
- If your AP head was here what would you say to them? How could they make AP better
- If you were talking to some pupils about to attend AP, what advice would you give them about how to get the most out of it?
- If parenthood, did AP help prepare you for this in any way?
  - How would you support your children at school?
  - How would you feel / what would you think if they went to AP
- Do you feel you experience at AP changed you as a person
- Do you think your time at AP changed the course of your life in any way?
- Do you think AP is a good thing or should mainstream school change so that all pupils can go there?
- What could mainstream learn from AP?
- If your old mainstream head was here
  - what advice would you give them about using AP
  - about what they could learn from AP?

## **Appendix 5: Outline interview structure used when re-interviewing young adults**

How have you been since we met last?

Has anything changed for you?

[Space for any questions which have developed after reflecting on their interview]

So, I would like to share some of my thoughts about types of pupils who end up in alternative provision settings and what successful practice looks like with them.

Before I show you a model I have developed, I would like to ask if you think a basic difference between mainstream and alternative provision schooling is that the mark of success in mainstream is academic achievement whereas in alternative provision it is relationships. Would you recognise that from your experience?

Show the model:

- Do you recognise these types?
- Do any of them resonate with your personal experience, perhaps just one or maybe a combination?
  - If a combination can you say whether one is primary for you?
- Can you name people who were in alternative provision with you who were the other types?
- Is any type missing?

If this was all I said at the end of my research would there be any glaring holes? Is there anything that in your opinion is important but not captured by this model and the idea of success in alternative provision broadly being about relationships whereas in mainstream it is about academic success?

## **Appendix 6: Outline interview structure when interviewing professionals working with pupils before and after alternative provision**

Explain research, nature of alternative provision schooling and its effect on those who attend, have also begun thinking about types/characteristics of pupils who attend, with this in mind:

- Can you tell me about what you do and how you do it? – what are your aims, what are you trying to achieve?
- Can you tell me about the effect what you do has on those who you work with?
- Can you tell me about any types of pupils/young people who you work with?

So, I would like to share some of my thoughts about types of pupils who end up in alternative provision settings and what successful practice looks like with them.

Before I show you a model I have developed, I would like to ask if you think a basic difference between mainstream and alternative provision schooling is that the mark of success in mainstream is academic achievement whereas in alternative provision it is relationships. Would you recognise that from your experience?

Show the model:

- Do you recognise these types?
- Do you see them as singular or found in combination?
  - If in combination would you say one tends to be primary?
- Can you name pupils/young people who are/were in with you who were these types?
- Is any type missing?

If this was all I said at the end of my research would there be any glaring holes? Is there anything that in your opinion is important but not captured by this model and the idea of success in alternative provision broadly being about relationships whereas in mainstream it is about academic success?



## Appendix 7: Model used in conjunction with appendices 5 and 6

